

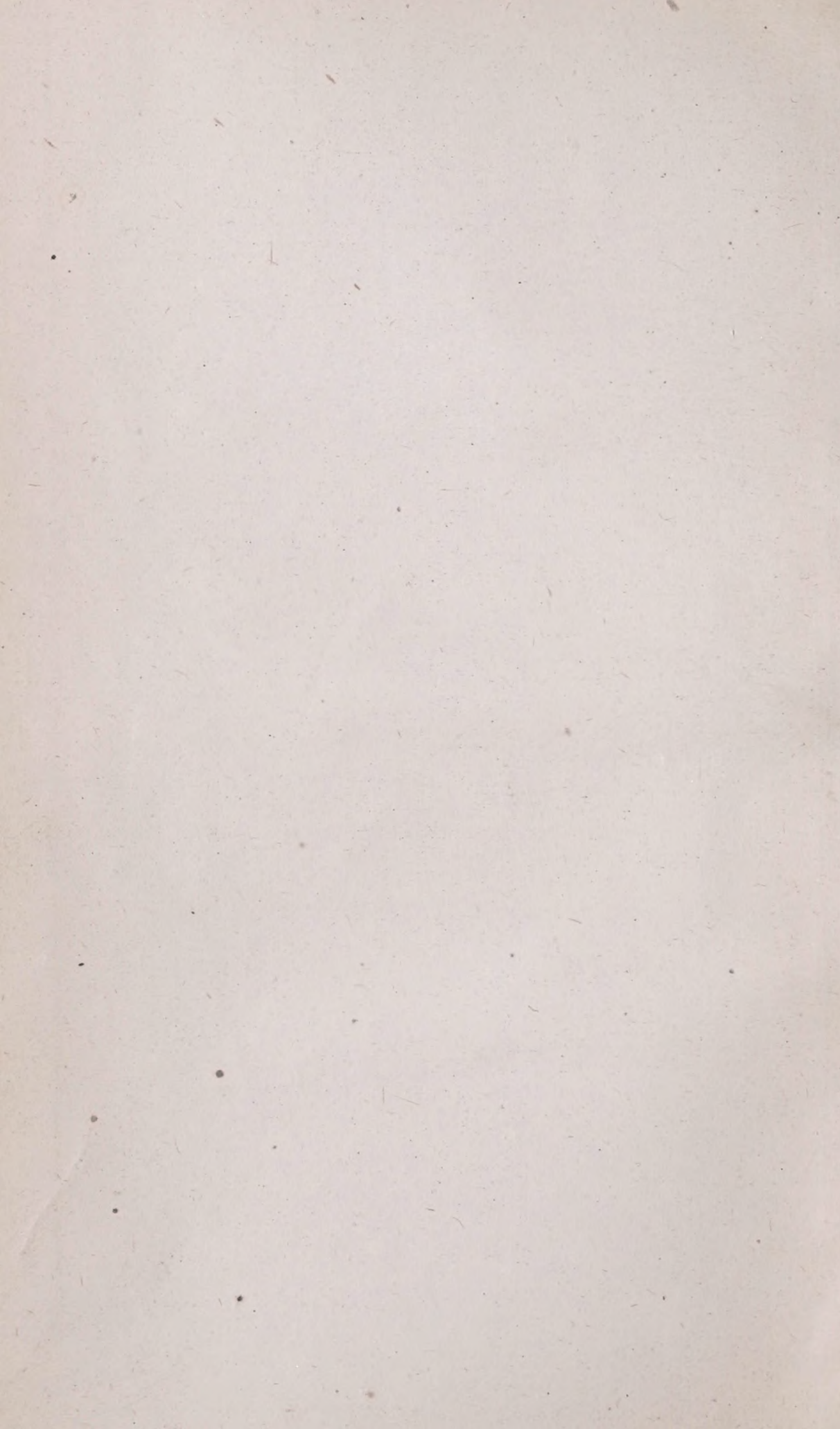
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2
"MESSENGER" SERIES, No. 2.

SIMON PETER

AND

SIMON MAGUS,

A Legend

OF THE

EARLY DAYS OF CHRISTIANITY IN ROME.

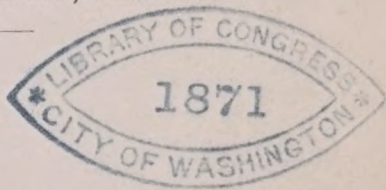
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BY REV. JOHN JOSEPH FRANCO, S. J.

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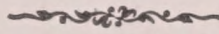
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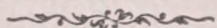
17. 17. July 5.



INTRODUCTION.



HERE are two cities whose names have been, for so many ages, associated with all the greatest events society has witnessed, that to study their history is to study the history of mankind—Jerusalem, the “Holy City,” and the “Eternal City,” Rome. No other cities have held the same relations to God and man. Within their bounds have sprung up and thence gone forth as a mighty river, deep and strong, to the very ends of the earth, the grandest evolutions in human thought and human feeling that the world has ever seen, or will ever again behold.



It was in the Holy City, amid the throng which came up to it from every part of Judea, that HE once moved who spoke as never man spoke, and wrought wonders such as the world had never before witnessed: He who looked upon the beauty of its courts, and wept for the desolation that was to come upon them: He who went forth from it bearing His cross, and within sight of its temples and its palaces, consummated the redemption of the human race.

So, from the Eternal City, while she was yet mistress of the Pagan world, went forth by the Ostian Gate, on the memorable 29th of June, A.D. 65, two of the most illustrious followers of that Divine Master, to lay down their lives for the faith which Rome hated, but which was to make Rome the capital of God's earthly kingdom: to die for that Church "which is before all time, fills all time, and

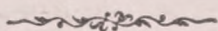
after all time will still live on to fill eternity."

They were

"Ecclesiarum Principes,
Belli triumphales Duces,"

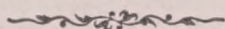
chiefs of the Church, leaders in the warfare against the powers of darkness. They were, amidst Rome's myriad martyrs, the two whose memory was to leave the deepest impress on the minds of men in connection with her Christian history, and to be perpetuated on the soil itself by the noblest monument ever raised by the hand of man.

Such were Peter and Paul, the founders of Christian Rome—Rome, "the city of the soul," whom her former sons proudly called "the light of the universe and the citadel of all nations." Thus, in the affections of mankind, do Rome and Jerusalem take part together, the two cities of the world of whom it has



been said, they "sum up within themselves the destines of mankind."

Of all the myriads passing to and fro, amidst whom the Fisherman of Galilee made his way when he entered Rome, A.D. 40, about twelve years after the crucifixion and death of our Redeemer, how few, if even one, could have conceived the lofty mission in life and in death that was to be fulfilled by that obscure Jewish stranger! This little volume will develop all. The intrinsic interest the subject possesses for every Catholic Christian is heightened in these pages by the charms of the narrative itself, and by the treasures of historical and archæological learning by which it is enriched. It reads rather like a history set down by an eye-witness, than one compiled in these later days from fragmentary records and the few traditions which have survived the days of Peter and Paul. It may be said



of it, "They who do not love Rome will not understand it. They who do understand it, will love Rome the more."

This volume forms the second of the series of republications (of which "Leandro; or, the Sign of the Cross," was the first,) from the Messenger of the Sacred Heart.*

* Rev. B. Sestini, S. J., Editor, Woodstock, Howard Co., Maryland.





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SIMON PETER AND SIMON MAGUS.

A Legend.

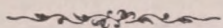
CHAPTER I.

THE FAITHFUL OF ROME.

IT was a beautiful morning, in early spring; the sun, rising majestically over the Tiburtine hills, gave life and beauty to the valley of the Anio, bathing in light the green slopes of Tusculum, darting his rays in the midst of Rome's proud splendors, and lighting up the old Patrician Street, at the foot of the hill whereon now stands St. Mary Major. Here, in the days of king Servius Tullius, rose the modest dwellings of the Roman Patricians; but in the time of Nero's reign, not only the little suburb, but the whole quarter called the Esquiline, had become a scene of pride, luxury and ostentation. For here the visitors from the Provinces who



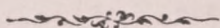
had no claim on private hospitality in the great Capital, found the crowded and noisy taverns which abounded in this suburb; close to these taverns stood the palaces, which were overshadowed by great temples, and these, in turn, were surrounded by splendid baths and basilicas, by spacious squares, noble aqueducts and public markets; near by, too, were the gardens of Mæcenæas blooming on the spot where once was the burying-place of the Plebeians; and the pleasure-grounds of informers enriched by the Cæsars, and of freedmen but yesterday raised from the mire. It was the hour of the morning salutation, when throngs of servile clients might be seen crowding, pushing and elbowing one another in the vestibules of the wealthy citizens. The courts of the more magnificent lodgings swarmed with this class of beggars, in their best attire; several servants were moving about among them with insolent arrogance, stopping here and there to make seemly some well-worn toga, and dividing the unfortunate clients into various classes, as friends of the first, second or third audience. Meanwhile, the dole-baskets were preparing in the adjoining dining-hall, generously or scantily furnished, according to the degree of favor enjoyed by the intended recipient; while the wealthy patron, little caring to be disturbed by this too-early saluta-



tion of his friends in the atrium, was still in bed sleeping off the fumes of last night's carouse.

Far different was the scene in the palace of the Senator Cornelius Pudens,* though here too the vestibule was thronged by numerous clients. Here no slave, chained to the doorway, threatened the visitor with his knotted club; nor was the ear startled by the scarcely more fierce mastiff which growled at the fierce or ill-favored fellow-doorkeeper. But the clients, though poor and but scantily furnished in dress, crossed the threshold without fear, and were received with true dignity and grandeur; and the needy plebeian who came in his poor working tunic, went away with his basket generously filled, far oftener than did the fawning flatterers of other wealthy patrons. This was especially the case when the two pious daughters of the Senator came down to take part in the work of making up the baskets. Praxedes and Pudentiana

* "Salutant te Eubulus, et Pudens, et Linus, et Claudia," II. Tim. iv. 21. Concerning this Pudens, and the others of whom St. Paul makes mention, when writing from Rome shortly before his martyrdom, we have adopted the ancient and commonly received tradition. *Vid.* Baron. Ann. 44, No. 61. Ann. 57, No. 101. Ann. 59, No. 18. This tradition is favored also by learned writers of a later date, among others may be mentioned Reumont, "*Geschichte der Stadt Rom*," Berlin, 1867, 8vo. Part I. p. 360.

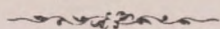


were, with their parents, Pudens and Claudia, among the fairest and most flourishing plants of the Church's garden, raised by the care of the Apostle Peter.

While the Senator was moving about the atrium, shaking hands or exchanging greetings with his clients, with more of the affectionate tenderness of a brother than the proud reserve of the Roman patron, a courier, who had just dismounted in the courtyard, before the atrium, where rose the statue of Pudens, called out to the porter: "Is your master at home?"

"Yes," replied the slave; "there he is with his friends, within."

The courier approached the Senator, and pausing at a respectful distance addressed him with the greatest deference: "Most excellent Cornelius Pudens: letters from Asia." And he handed him a sealed package. The Senator looked at the seal, which represented a shepherd bearing a lamb upon his shoulders. Without making any other reply, he turned to the freedman who stood at his side, and tapping him upon the shoulder, whispered into his ear: "He is one of ours; call Claudia and see that he be attended to." And giving him the packet he motioned to them both to pass into the *tablinum* or muniment-room, which opened into the upper end



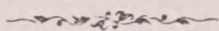
of the atrium. He had soon despatched his business with his clients and hastened to the study, where he found the courier seated at a marble table well furnished, by the attention of the freedman, with the necessary refreshments; while Claudia, who had come down to do the honors of the mansion, was questioning him with evident interest.

This noble senatorial family was never happier than when its generous hospitality could be extended to a brother in the faith. "See, Pudens," exclaimed the pious matron, with an expression of great joy, as her husband entered the room, "here is a messenger from the Church of Seleucia; we shall have some news from the Saints in Asia."

The Senator smiled in reply, and looking more attentively at the courier, he recognized him as a fugitive slave, called Onesimus, converted in Rome by Paul, and freed on this account by his master Philemon. He immediately approached him, pressed him to his bosom and kissed him upon the forehead, with the salutation: "The grace and peace of Jesus Christ be with you; you are the friend of Paul, and therefore ours."

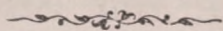
"Thanks," replied the messenger, "I am the slave of Philemon."

"Here," returned the Senator, "you are free in the liberty of Jesus Christ. I have read the letter



of Paul recommending you to your master; what you have done for Paul endears you to the whole Church of Rome."* Meanwhile, the Senator had been breaking the seals which secured the package, and looking over the letters he read the superscriptions aloud: "This is for Peter, this for Paul, for Luke, for Clement, for Linus. This one"—here he paused to examine more closely the superscription of the one in his hand, and then continued with an expression of some surprise—"To Praxedes and Pudentiana, daughters of Cornelius Pudens! What can this mean? Read, Claudia, 'To Praxedes and Pudentiana, daughters of Cornelius Pudens;' what a delight it will be for our little girls to know that the Saints of Seleucia write to them, too! Send a servant for them at once with word that I expect them in my study." Then turning to the messenger, he continued: "While I forward the other letters to their destination and receive the answers, you shall be our guest; your hand," and they shook hands as a pledge of mutual faith. "Peter and Paul are not at present in Rome: the solicitude of all the Churches

* St. Paul, writing to Philemon, calls Onesimus his son and "his own bowels." He affectionately exhorts his friend to receive back the fugitive, "not now as a servant, but a most dear brother, and even as himself," and this because of his recent baptism, and the services he had rendered the apostle who was then a prisoner.



calls them away to the help of infant communities. However, I shall find means to ascertain their whereabouts and to transmit these letters to them, with those which come to me for them every day. Clement is in the city; Linus is here in our own house, and last night he broke bread in our assembly. Mark, my friend, last *night!* let this be your guide; we are no longer in the times of Burrhus and Seneca; Tigellinus is our prefect now. God grant that he, too, may accompany Cæsar to Achaia,* that the Church may breathe in peace for a moment. You know what streams of blood have reddened the Vatican, and how freely it has daily flowed since the publication of the Edict of Proscription. In a word, we live amid tortures and deaths, as Paul expresses it."†

Pudens was still speaking when Pudentiana, who, with her sister Praxedes, came skipping across the little lawn of the inner garden, approached her father with the apology: "Father, we have made you wait too long; what did you want with us? We were just finishing our prayers in the oratory." And her words were confirmed by the appearance of their dress, which consisted of an extremely plain tunic reaching to the instep, and covered by a light cloak;

* Sueton. *Nero*, 22

† II Cor. ix. 23.

the hair was not braided with pearls and jewels, but gathered modestly into a knot behind, and confined by a simple net: a white veil fell upon the shoulders, precisely as they had been taught by their catechists, the Apostles.* Pudens kissed his daughters, and said to the younger: "You are a little late, but not too late. Here is a letter directed to you. I did not know that you had already established a foreign correspondence so distant. This is a pretty business! Here is a courier from Seleucia with despatches for my little lady Pudentiana; and I do not know who sends them!" and with these words he handed her the sealed parchment. The little maiden drew back her hand in great trepidation, and blushing deeply, replied, while her voice trembled with fear and surprise: "Nor do I know who is acquainted with me across the seas; read it yourself, father."

* I Peter, iii, 1 seq.—I Tim. ii, 9.—St. Linus, a disciple of Peter and Paul, ordered that no woman should enter the church without a veil upon her head (Baron. ann. 80. No. 4). Even at this early date it was found necessary to issue stringent ordinances against immoderate display in dress. "The long trails which reach even below the feet, are a mark of ostentation and vain pride; it is an impediment in walking, and besides the dress is thus made to do the office of a broom, sweeping up all the filth of the pavements," etc., etc. Who would take this to be the language of a Father of the Church in the second century? And yet it is found in Clement of Alexandria, *Pedag.* II, 10., opp. ed. Migne; t. I., p. 532.

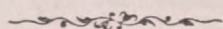
“No, no,” interrupted Claudia, seating the little girl upon her lap and kissing her; “read it yourself, my dear. Do you not see that your father is in sport? It came with other letters from the Saints in Asia.”

Pudentiana drew a long breath, looked around in astonishment, and exclaimed, “Is it possible?” Then breaking the seal, she read aloud: “Thecla, to the dearest sisters Praxedes and Pudentiana, greeting:”—

“But who is this Thecla?” asked Pudens of the courier; “the martyr of Christ?”

“The same,” replied the messenger.

The astonishment of the girls was but increased by this information. But Pudentiana continued: “Think it not strange, dearest sisters, if a sister to you unknown, thus writes to you. For while I remain in my retreat here in Seleucia, hidden from the world, the good odor of your virtues has reached all the Churches of the East. We bless God that the house of Cornelius Pudens is made the abode of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and the refuge of the brethren in Rome; and, moreover, that his daughters have come to be esteemed the ornaments of the Gospel. Most excellent sisters, I beg you to send me some tidings concerning Paul, who bestowed upon me the Holy Ghost. Did you know with



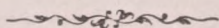
what solicitude he labored to form Christ in me, feeding me first with the milk, then with the solid food of the Spirit, you would certainly forgive my importunity. I was wandering about in the darkness of error and eaten up by the cares of the world; he taught me the truth and showed me the happiness of those who consecrate their virginity to the Lord. I am weak and timid; but he has assured me that God will not allow me to be tempted beyond my strength, and that the very temptation will prove a gain to me instead of a loss. I entreated to be allowed to follow him in order that I might hear his teachings; but he did not grant my prayer. Happy you, O Roman brethren, to whom it is given to hear his words! Here, all love him most tenderly, and all grieve at his long absence. The last time we saw him, at Miletus, he told us that the Spirit of God called him to Jerusalem, witnessing to him that chains and afflictions awaited him there, and that we should see his face no more. And when he had spoken this sad farewell he knelt down and prayed with us. There was much weeping among all; all embraced him with great sorrow because of the word which he had said, that we should see his face no more; and we all accompanied him to the ship.* During the whole course of his journey, the

* Act xx, 17-38.

prophets of the various Churches repeated their warnings, and the disciples would have dissuaded him from going up to Jerusalem. But the generous Apostle, far from allowing himself to be discouraged, only hastened on his way, declaring that he was ready not only to be bound but even to die for the name of the Lord Jesus, in the city where He had suffered for love of us.* What did he not suffer in Jerusalem, and in other places, on land and on sea! The Saints of Italy know his trials; for they saw him land on their shores, bound with chains, and live there for two years as a prisoner.† But at length the angel that had freed Peter broke the chains of Paul; and the Churches of Greece and Asia were enabled to see him again; though indeed he was rather shown than given back to them. It was not allowed me to throw myself at the feet of my beloved master; and to fill the measure of my misfortunes (if the dispositions of God can be called misfortunes.) I hear, in our assemblies, the dreadful

* Acts xxi, 13.—It was not unusual, in the assemblies of the early Christians, to see some of the brethren rise up to prophesy; or, in other words, to explain the meaning of the Sacred Text, to make known the lights received from the Holy Ghost, or to communicate other things conducive to the general edification. This is treated at large in the 14th ch. of the 1st Ep. to the Corinthians.

† Ibid. xxviii, 12–30.

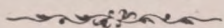


report that the Spirit recalls him to Rome to consummate his course and receive the crown of justice.* Ah! perhaps he is already there! already in chains! already in the lion's jaws! Pudentiana and Praxedes, my sisters, strengthen my weakness by some tidings of consolation, and comfort me in my bitter grief. And if God allows no more, kiss the chains of Paul for me, and recommend me to his prayers. Remember the charity of Christ in calling us out of the darkness into the light, in which we have been bound together by an everlasting tie: remember that the Apostles of the Lord never despised my grief; no, nor did even the divine Mother of Jesus Christ despise it, for she often received me with motherly tenderness, at Ephesus. Do not then, servants of the Lord, despise the tears of His unworthy handmaid. Grace be with you and all yours. Amen."

"But who am I?" exclaimed Praxedes, "that Thecla, the great confessor of Jesus Christ, should think of me!"

Pudentiana had meanwhile fallen on her knees

* Several of the holy Fathers assert that St. Paul had this vision and declared it; among others, St. Augustine and St. Athanasius: and certainly a foundation for the statement is afforded by the Epistle of St. Paul, written shortly before his martyrdom.—II Tim. iv, 6-8.

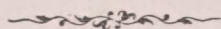


and was pressing the letter to her lips, confounded at the thought that her name should be known to the renowned martyr, and that Thecla should have asked from her tidings of an Apostle. Pudens filled with joy at the sight of such noble humility in his daughter, raised her up, and turning to Onesimus: "Why," he asked, "did you say nothing of Thecla? Tell us something of her holy conversation." . . .

"What could I tell you that you do not already know? She is the mirror of Christian virgins; and it is the universal sentiment that Paul, when he converted her, communicated to her a portion of his apostolic spirit. She makes herself the servant of the Church and of the poor, washes the feet of the saints, and goes from house to house preaching Christ to those of her own sex, just as the lady Claudia Sabinilla here, and your daughters and others like them are doing everyday." . . .

'But,' interposed Pudentiana, "we have not suffered by fire and sword, for Jesus Christ; we have not met the lions of the amphitheatre as Thecla has."*

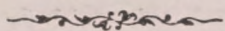
* No woman of the apostolic period was more illustrious than St. Thecla, and none has ever been more highly eulogized by the Fathers, both Greek and Latin. St. Gregory Nazianzen mentioned her together with the Apostles, as a witness of the faith which should have won the respect of Julian, the Apostate.



At this point of the conversation the Bishop Linus, who also enjoyed the hospitality of Pudens, during this time of persecution, was seen advancing slowly through the galleries of the atrium, and approaching the vestibule. The Senator sent to beg that he would come to them for a moment to read the despatches and see the bearer. The saint entered the study, gave the kiss of peace to Onesimus, and after perusing his letter with an expression of trouble and sorrow, he said: "Pray to God, my brethren, that He would take pity on our misfortunes. Timothy, the disciple of Paul, writes that the doctrines of Simon* are causing great trouble there; and he asks the advice of the Apostles. Poor Bishop of Ephesus! He does not know that Peter and Paul are far away from Rome,

Vid. Baron. ann. 47, No. 1 *et seqq.*, and the Bollandists, 27th Sept. She was renowned for her constancy amid the torments suffered in defence of her virginity, for the miracles by which God preserved her life for the edification of the Church, and for her devotion to St. Paul who had converted her in the city of Iconium, where he preached in the year 47. Act. xiv. 1-6. We have here joined the name of Claudia to that of Sabinilla, believing that the two names did, in all probability, belong together. For tradition informs us that the Claudia mentioned by St. Paul,—II Tim. iv. 21,—was the wife of Pudens; and again, in the acts of St. Pudentiana, the wife of Pudens is called Sabinilla. Respecting the value of these acts, *vid.* Bolland, May 19th, where the hasty criticism of Tillemont is well answered.

* Simon Magus.

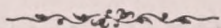


and that we, tossed about by the same storm, are at a loss to know whether we should call them to our assistance or entreat them to avoid the danger and preserve themselves for the Church."

As soon as he had recovered from his emotion he listened to the account of Thecla's letter to the daughters of the Senator, and perceiving their confusion at the mention of the fact: "Why are you troubled, my children?" he said to them kindly: "Do you not remember that we are all brothers in Christ? What wonder that Thecla should write to you and ask for tidings of the Roman Church? One of you should write to tell her, in all simplicity, whatever you know about our affairs; just as you would write to the Lady Claudia if she were at the villa, at Baiæ. Tell her that the Roman Church is in the greatest trouble, that Christian blood is daily shed upon the Vatican and outside of every gate, that the same news comes to us from all the Churches in Italy, that Peter and Paul——"

Here Linus broke off suddenly, turned away his head to hide his emotion, and hastened from the room.

He could only say to Pudens, who had followed him from the apartment: "Peter and Paul announce in the Churches that their passion is at hand! Alas! what will become of the Roman Church amid so



furious a persecution, amid so many scandals raised by Simon Magus, amid so many apostasies? May our Lord Jesus Christ succor our bark tossed about and on the eve of shipwreck!" And the holy bishop turned his steps towards the Trastevere, where several neophytes were waiting to receive baptism at his hands: and thence to visit the Tullian prison, in which many confessors supported by Christian charity were expecting the hour of martyrdom.

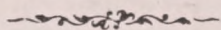




CHAPTER II.

THE HEATHENS OF ROME.

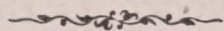
CORNELIUS PUDENS, though deeply grieved by the words of Linus, still left his house at the usual hour, and proceeded slowly toward the quarter known as the *Carene*, in order to avoid the shops of the Suburra; thence he went down, escorted by the whole body of his clients, into the Sacred Way and to the Forum, where he was obliged to spend the morning. Yet not all the turmoil of the disputants crowding around the Prætor's tribunal, nor the wrangling of the lawyers, nor the harangues of the jugglers on their stands, nor the busy hum of the mingled throng of the great men and plebeians about the bankers' tables, or on the steps and porticoes of the basilicas, could tear from his breast the dart which had been fastened in it, by the tidings of the danger which threatened the Apostle Peter, of the imminent peril of the



Roman Church. Every hour measured by the water-clock of the Capitol seemed lengthened into ages, so anxiously did he look for the hour of noon, when he might bid adieu to the business of the Forum, and retire to sigh and pray alone in solitude and recollection.

The wished-for hour at length arrived; taking leave of his friends, who did not let him go without some difficulty, he entered his litter, and gave his order to the bearers: "Home." But a new thought seemed to strike him suddenly—"Peter is on his way back to us: new storms are gathering from all sides against him: it might be well at least to reconnoitre the field and to sound the dispositions of the courtiers." And drawing back the curtains of his litter he gave a new order: "To the Octavian library."

The streets of Rome were deserted and silent, for everybody had hurried home to enjoy the usual mid-day nap; but the Octavian library was never empty; there the inflated sophists, the idle grammarians and chance rhetoricians usually congregated, as they had no better dormitory. Pudens thought that he should probably hear here some court-gossip who could give him the run of matters in the imperial palace. He succeeded better than he had hoped, for he had hardly alighted at the



portico, when he was accosted by the philosopher Demetrius, a Cynic by profession though not one of the lower class, and moreover a secret enemy and most cordial despiser of Nero.* The Cynic was well acquainted with the Senator, whom he had frequently met at the dwelling of Thrasea Peto, another Senator by no means friendly to the Prince; he accordingly gave him a cordial greeting:

“Well met, Cornelius Pudens, what new decrees are you getting up for us, there in the Forum?”

“You know as much about that as the Senators,” replied Pudens.

“Well,” continued the philosopher, “Cæsar is all goodness. He does not wish to lay burdens upon you: what a pleasant way of vegetating! never to sweat a drop! no harder work than to hold the light for Tigellinus, Polycletus, Ælius, Nymphidius, and those other fine fellows who deal out felicity to us blessed mortals!”

“Hush! the informers!” interrupted the Senator.

“I know my chickens,” said Demetrius. “With others I should be as mute as the Egyptian

* This Demetrius and his open antipathy against the Cæsars are mentioned by Seneca, Epictetus, and Philostratus. Tacitus represents him at the death-bed of Thrasea Petus, Ann. XVI, 35. He was afterwards exiled, but returned and was at Rome under Domitian, Tac. Hist. IV, 40. We represent him as speaking according to his historical character.

Harpocrates. Prudence is the word! I fly the court as I would the gates of Tartarus."

"That is something of a figure of speech," resumed Pudens, "for I know that you ferret out the most hidden secrets of the palace; you cynics are all of a piece."

"In heart, yes; in profession, no! And to tell you the plain truth, there are some who make very fair professions, but hardly realize them in practice."

"But whom do you fear?"

"Everybody."

"Who rules the palace, now?"

"Tigellinus, of course; but the ministers who rule under him are mountebanks, pimps, pipers,—in fact, all the rabble of Baiæ follows in his train. Still, the sceptre seems to have passed lately into the hands of one of the circumcised."

"Who is he?"

"A philosopher, dialectician, magician, diviner—in fact, their god. Our Cæsar adores him because the knave has promised to teach him such mysteries and charms that he may command even king Jove and all the great gods of Olympus."

"His name?"

"The Jews call him Simon; but at court he is known as Icarus."

"What! does he pretend to fly?"

“Pretend? He has even promised that sight to Lucius Domitius Nero Claudius Augustus Germanicus, &c., &c.; he has promised it with oaths repeated and reiterated.”

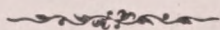
“What if he should not succeed?”

“Oh! leave reflection for to-morrow. For the present he is stuffing his skin and his purse. He takes care to display every day some new prodigy more astonishing than yesterday’s, by way of accustoming Cæsar to the sight of such wonders; and the philosophers meanwhile stand by and hold his toga, for they hope to root in the trough of Midas, too.”

“And to which side have you attached yourself?”

“Faith, to the one that keeps farthest from Cæsar; for if Nero, in the intervals of these diversions, should happen to remember certain tricks of mine, his first loving return would be to give me a coat of pitch and honor me with a standing place on the Vatican to light him in his evening rides.”*

* It is well known that the space now occupied by St. Peter’s, with its great square, as well as the whole extent of the Borgo Nuova and Borgo Vecchio, were once embraced by the gardens and circus of Nero, the scene of the first general persecution of the Christians. Some were devoured by beasts, others tarred and burned alive; these facts are mentioned by Tacitus, Suetonius, Seneca, Martial, Juvenal, and by the Ecclesiastical writers.



Pudens could not restrain a deep sigh ; but as he had determined at any cost to reconnoitre, he continued with apparent unconcern :

“To judge by your words, you do not seem to have been much taken with all this display. Why not become a client of this Simon the Jew, to enjoy his protection ?”

“I would rather give myself to all three of the furies. I would be their friend, their slave, if they would but do a certain thing according to my mind—however, I know my prayers to mother Hecate.”

“Remember, my dear cynic, that we are no longer in the days of Diogenes and Alexander.”

“True ! for we live in better days. The misfortune is that you easy Senators only know how to recline in your ivory chairs ; I’ve no patience with that dolt of a Montanus. By Pluto ! he had the game in his hands, and—but enough !”

“What do you mean ?”

“You wish to play innocent, eh ! Do you not know that the other night, in this very Rome, a certain married Senator caught Cæsar disguised and in his house, according to the usual custom of the imperial debauchee ? and he belabored the imperial intruder so soundly that he was obliged to keep at home for several days, engaged, as he gave out, in practising on the lyre, but, as we said, in

studying *fractions*.* The great fault of Montanus, in this case, was that he contented himself with thrashing the brute; he ought to have thrown him head first into a sewer."

"Yes, but what would the papers have said?"†

"The papers? You mean history. The provinces and the army would have given Montanus a triumph. Why, the very Jews would have celebrated two Sabbaths in that week."

"You told me, just now, that the Jews rule in the palace of Nero."

"And are you too one of the queer heads? The palace is ruled by the faction of Simon Icarus, but his favor at court has ruined him on the other side of the Tiber.‡ The partizans of Chrestus make little of him, and threaten him with their most expert sorcerers from Judea——"

* Sueton. *Nero*. 4, 26; Tacit. *Ann.* XIII, 25; Plin. XIII, 43.

† These were the *Acta Diurna*, real official journals, sent from Rome, and read *per provincias, per exercitus*. Tac. *Ann.* XVI, 22. Tacitus (*Ann.* XIII, 32,) establishes clearly the distinction between events and annals, and between news and newspapers.

‡ For several centuries after the reign of Caligula the Jews lived, for the most part, in the region known as the Trastevere (across the Tiber), Baron. *Ann.* 69, No. 9. St. Peter resided among them in the beginning, which does not, however, make anything against the tradition that he enjoyed the hospitality of Pudens, at the foot of the Esquiline and Viminal.

“For instance?”

“Oh! they have more of them than I could tell you: there is Cephas, and Simon Barjona, and Peter, and Paul, and Saul, and a host more.”

“But what does Simon Icarus say of it?”

“He declares that he will have all these Christian magicians before the Emperor, expose them, refute them, and send them to the slaughter house to be flayed alive.”

“Do you really think that he will succeed?”

“Why, as to that, I can't say, for I never trouble my head about such matters, whether the followers of Simon or those of that Chrestus win, is all one to me; I let the dogs fight it out among themselves. However, Tigellinus and his party are for Simon, Nero is for Simon; a man would have to be very well off to get the better of Simon now. You know Tigellinus' way of winning; he sends you a centurion with four stout prætorians, a little bleeding and—good night!”

Pudens had learned as much of the court news as he wanted, for in spite of the confused expressions and misnomers of the heathen philosopher, he had been able to trace the plan of Simon Magus.*

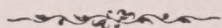
* That the Heathens often confounded Christianity and Judaism is clearly proved by well-known passages of Tacitus and Suetonius. We also learn from the writings of St. Clement,



Taking leave therefore of the excited philosopher, who would have accompanied him home, he threw himself again into his litter. Meanwhile, the streets were gradually filling up with young men of leisure and the usual idlers, all moving in the direction of the Campus Martius, though it was not yet three o'clock. He called on some of the principal Christians, members of the noblest families; among these was the illustrious Pomponia Græcina, known among the Christians as Lucina,* and Plautilla, one of that Flavian race which was soon to furnish Rome with emperors and consuls, which had already given to the Church saints, soon to become martyrs. Pudens did not divine these mysterious views of Providence, nor were the other Christians more enlightened on the subject. Their conversa-

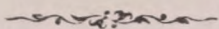
Pope, that St. Peter was looked upon by the Jews as a magician. We also find that Simon Magus brought against St. Peter, while in Antioch, a formal charge of sorcery.—Vid. *Recognit.* X, 54, *Opp. Ed. Migne*, t.,1, p. 1446; and in his *Homilies*, *passim*.

* We have already several times expressed our assent to the not improbable conjecture that the Lucina so well known, in ecclesiastical tradition, for her devotion to St. Peter, is the Pomponia Græcina of Tacitus. That the latter was a Christian, we can hardly doubt, after reading the whole context of *Tac. Ann.* XIII, 32. The Plautilla mentioned in the martyrdom of the Apostles was probably of the Flavian house.—Cf. *Caron. An.* 69, No. 9;—*Bolland*, May 20th.



tions were mingled with sighs, and expressions of anguish and consternation. Some were mourning friends exiled by proscription, others wept for relations sacrificed to pagan fury; all were in the deepest grief at the daily tidings of death inflicted upon the brethren in Rome and throughout all Italy. When they learned from the Senator the plan of operations against Peter, they broke out into bitter grief, and raising their hands to heaven, prayed for mercy.

The mind of the Senator, filled with such thoughts as these, was shocked at the sight presented by pagan Rome, as he passed through its now crowded streets. The people of the lower classes swarmed from all sides, absorbed in the pursuit of their own pleasures, without a thought of the axes of Nero, which only fell upon the necks of the great and wealthy, or of the hated Christians. Careless of the sighs and sufferings of the Church, the Campus Martius was thronged as usual; as full as ever of wrestlers, athletes, ball-players and horsemen; the porticoes, the libraries, the walks, the baths re-echoed the tones of the readers; in the by-streets and markets the corybantes of Cybele were beating their drums and slashing one another with their knives, in the hope of making a farthing or two out of some compassionate dupe; the people



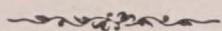
were listening to the dissertations of the cynic philosophers; the lying priests of Isis and Anubis sold their mysteries, while, close by, loud-mouthed mountebanks were crying their charms against the bite of serpents. Idle, sensual and cruel people, spending whole days and even years in such pursuits, outraging the world which must pay for its pleasures!

“What a life is Rome leading now!” sighed Pudens, as he heard the gong of the *Thermæ* summoning the people to the baths. “After luxury, surfeit, and after the surfeit, follow the orgies, carried far into the night! and the morrow only brings a repetition of the same, with the sole difference, perhaps, that he who spent to-day amid the dust of the *Campus Martius*, will spend to-morrow amid the blood of the circus; and he who to-day waded in the gore of the slaughter-pens, to-morrow will bathe in the Tiber opposite the *Campus Martius*.”

Such indeed was Rome, degraded by the Cæsars; and under the last of the line she had reached the lowest depth of ignominy. Under Nero, the plundering of the provinces to replenish the imperial chest, and furnish amusements to the people, had become more open and shameless than in any preceding reign; yet while rolling in wealth, they

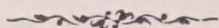
were ever in want; ever glutting yet always famished. The Emperor never sent a magistrate to the provinces without the instruction: "Remember that I need money; seize everything."* True, each day witnessed the rise of some new building, which, by its immense bulk, gave an air of majestic splendor to the imperial capital; it was one grand collection of temples, palaces, courts, baths, columns, statues, markets and theatres; one glare of rich marbles, precious metals and costly gems. Nero's golden house, which was nearly finished at the time of our narrative, took in three of the hills of Rome—the Palatine, the Cælian and the Quirinal—and contained more master-pieces of art than are to be found, at the present day, in all the museums of Europe. And yet the Romans of Nero's day were the most wretched people on the face of the earth. Nine-tenths of them were slaves, as little considered, in those times, as beasts of burden; not men, but chattels, without country, without family, without any right to honor, to virtue, or to life. The remainder were citizens; though, indeed, many of them were clients whose condition was but little

* "Scis quid mihi opus est. Hoc agamus, ne quis quidquam habeat." Sueton. *Nero*, 32. To plunder was wrong, but at least Nero did not say: "Justice for all; all equal before the tax."



above that of an ordinary slave; the wealthy were few, and these were the slaves of their own slaves; slaves of their clients, of their freedmen, of the Emperor; but especially the slaves of their own passions.

Upon all this darkness there broke not even a distant dawning light, not the faintest ray of hope for any improvement in the social condition. Not only were the people strangers to all ideas of better things; they could not even imagine a reform; indeed, the very thought would have frightened them. They would have hated the man who said to them: To-morrow, the human slaughter-pens shall be closed; Romans, forget the amphitheatre. They would have hated him who hinted to them: To-morrow, the dens of infamy now open to the light of day shall be destroyed; Romans, forget the theatre. In fact, every one, in his own home, reproduced on a small scale, as far as his means allowed, the spirit of the circus and of the theatre; and he who could not do it, at least desired to do it. The very crimes of Nero afforded a source of amusement to his subjects; that people were worthy of Nero, and Nero was worthy of the people. The Senate might condemn him as having been an enemy to his country; the vulgar mind, since it could hope for no excesses greater than those of



Nero, long wept their departed favorite, festooned his monument with flowers, carried his statues about in triumph; and in hailing the accession of a successor to the throne, they knew no higher title of honor than to style him a second Nero.*

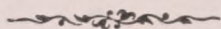
It is true that, now and then, a discontented growl might be heard from some Stoic or Cynic, in condemnation of the daily-growing brutality; but it amounted only to a little practice of style or an episode in an evening entertainment. Superstition too was there to brutalize its votaries with its impious and shameless mysteries, extinguishing the last sparks of natural piety and justice. What human power could reclaim the empire through Roman philosophy and Roman religion, when, but a short time before, Nero could walk the streets of Rome, his hands red with the blood of his mother, Agrippina, and receive the congratulations of Seneca and Burrhus, the two most upright men of the empire, on the success of his crime; when the Senate and people crowded tumultuously around to

* Sueton. *Nero*, 57. "Creditus est (*Otho*) etiam de celebranda Neronis memoria agitavisse, spe vulgus alliciendi; et fuere qui imagines Neronis proponerent. Atque etiam Othoni quibusdam diebus populus et miles tanquam nobilitatem et decus adstruerent, NERONI OTHONI adclamavit." Tac. Hist. I, 78.

greet him and raise triumphal arches in his honor, when all the open temples smoked with incense and the parricide went up to the Capitol to thank the gods for the blood he had drained from a mother's veins.*

One single luminous spot shone out from amid the darkness fostered by men and demons—the little mustard-seed of the gospel sown by Peter within the shadow of the Capitol. From that time the little seed became fruitful, and grew up into a tall, wide-spreading tree, without any other obstacle than the vices of the age. Pudens had seen the Apostles baptize a great number of Jews and multitudes of Gentiles; he had seen many churches reared opposite to the heathen shrines, and the gospel carried into the very palace of the Cæsars, where a disciple of Jesus Christ poured the rich Falernian into Nero's cup, while Pudens himself represented Christianity in the senate. This was certainly a bright and cheering prospect; it was like a friendly star breaking through the gloom of a stormy night. But now this bright beam was darkened by the smoke of burning Rome; a disgraceful crime which the imperial incendiary would

* Tac. Ann. XIV, 10-14.—This is one of the most disgraceful pages in the annals of the human race



have washed out in Christian blood ; while, to complete the work of crushing out the faith in Rome, an enemy even more cunning was at hand—Simon Magus.

“Who shall check Simon,” thought the Senator, “in his work of utter ruin? He is the personal enemy of Peter; he knows our secrets; perhaps at this very moment he has already planned the death of the Apostles. He has, on his side, Nero and Tigellinus; he has gold, influence, accomplices,—everything! God save the Church of Rome!”

Under the weight of his pressing grief the Senator, at his return home, could not partake of the usual meal, and rising from the table he said to Praxedes and Pudientiana: “Now, my children, is the time to pray.” The girls understood that some new disaster threatened the brethren, and they withdrew, with their mother, to pray. They did not know, however, that their father had spent the last few days in consulting the elders of the Church on the best means of saving Peter and Paul from the fury of the persecution. It had been finally determined to hold a meeting, on that very night, in the Senator’s house, in the apartments assigned for the meetings of the faithful. This was a large furnished room, in the most unfrequented part of the palace, into which opened a secret postern

carefully guarded by some faithful Christian slaves. At the appointed hour, besides Linus, a guest of the house, there were assembled here the Bishop Clement, Luke the Evangelist, Flavius Clemens, who afterwards became illustrious in the world as the nephew and cousin of Emperors, but still more illustrious in the Church, as the brother, husband and uncle of saints; who was afterwards, himself, a martyr of Jesus Christ.* Among the distinguished members of the council was Torpes, an officer of the imperial household, who came with many others, both priests and layman.

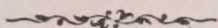
The consultation was not long; the information gathered from the various members soon made it but too evident that Peter and Paul could not escape the snares so skilfully set by Simon Magus; Nero, too, was so madly devoted to magic since the arrival of the great magician Tiridates, king of Armenia, that he passed whole days and nights in bleeding to death men, women and children, cutting

* Nephew of Vespasian, cousin of Titus, both Emperors; husband of St. Flavia Domitilla, uncle of another St. Flavia Domitilla, and brother to St. Plautilla, he was himself put to death by Domitian, in the year 95.—*Vid.* the lineage of the Flavii, by Brotier. *TAC. Opp.* Ed. Pomba, tom. V., page 22. St. Torpes was afterwards martyred at Pisa, and St. Paul probably alludes to him, when writing from Rome to the Philippians IV., 22: "Salutant vos omnes sancti, maxime qui de Cæsaris domo sunt."

up and carving their bodies, by way of apprenticeship in the devilish art for which he felt a daily-growing passion. Since Simon had been brought into the imperial court, with his truly wonderful exhibitions of magic, Cæsar actually doted on him and saw only with the eyes of Simon; Tigellinus seemed to have but one soul with the magician; so that now he was strong in the arms of both his powerful patrons, and there could be no doubt of his bitter hostility to Peter, for in Samaria, in Phenicia, and everywhere in Asia, Peter and Simon had been in a continual struggle.* What, then, remained but to fly from the destruction which otherwise seemed unavoidable?

But Linus, who took the place of Peter in the local government of the Roman Church, closed the deliberations by saying: "Brethren, since so it hath seemed good to the elders, I shall send forward a deacon for the purpose of keeping back Peter and Paul, if possible. I say if possible; for a voice in my heart tells me that while we are deliberating, they have started from Achaia, on their way to

* The contest between Peter and Simon forms the subject of the twenty long homilies attributed to that Pope, St. Clement I, whom we have introduced here present in the meeting at the house of Pudens.



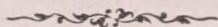
Rome, and if the winds have been favorable, they might already be in Italy."

"I shall, at once, dispatch couriers towards Brundisium," said Pudens.

"And I," added Flavius Clemens, "will send some by the Appian Way as far as Pozzuoli."

"And then," said Torpes, in conclusion, "we must use every possible means to save them; all the churches of Italy ought to be prepared, that wherever they happen to present themselves first, they may be informed of the state of things in Rome. Certainly the presence of our Apostles would be of immense benefit to the church now; but, believe me, for I have had every opportunity of examining matters closely, we cannot be so blind to facts as not to see that if they come here it can only be to fall under the axe of the executioner on the day after their arrival. Now, indeed, we are under a stricter obligation than ever to remember the words of Christ: 'Be ye wise as serpents.' And, in the name of the brethren who are of the household of Cæsar, I beseech you, our Fathers and teachers in Jesus Christ, to make every effort to keep away Peter and Paul, at least, until Simon's influence over Cæsar shall have grown a little weaker."

Torpes had not finished the last sentence of his advice, when the faithful slave who had been



stationed at the outer-door, rushed into the midst of the apartment, throwing wide open both folds of the door, and exclaimed, as if out of himself, "Peter and Paul!"

And there indeed stood the two Apostles before the startled assembly. They had reached Rome at nightfall, and without giving any notice of their arrival had hastened under cover of the increasing darkness, to the usual place of refuge, the hospitable mansion of Pudens.



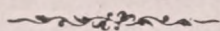


CHAPTER III.

ROMAN PIETY IN THE DAYS OF PETER AND PAUL.

THE sudden and unlooked-for appearance of the apostles Peter and Paul before the assembly at the house of Pudens, produced the effect of a burst of sunshine and a flash of lightning, simultaneously breaking through the gloom of a great storm. All rushed forward promiscuously with an indescribable mingling of joy and grief; some cast themselves at the feet of the apostles, others seized their hands, while some again threw themselves into their arms, hoping and fearing at the same time. The holy travellers embraced each one of the brethren, gave them all the kiss of the Lord, with the solemn salutation: "Peace be with thee,"* not with-

* The *kiss of peace* was a custom of religious and mystic import and was exchanged between members of the same sex; it was also a solemn usage in the sacred liturgy even outside of the churches; it was instituted, so to speak, by the example of Jesus Christ, recommended by the apostles (I Pet. v., 14; Rom. xvi., 16; and in other passages,) and preserved to our

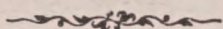


out a few sweet tears of paternal consolation at finding themselves among children so worthy and so affectionate. But when the first offices of charity had been discharged, Linus began to lay before them, in brief, the state of the Roman Church and the counsel of the elders assembled; "that the presence of Peter and Paul was sweet and long-desired, and yet all thought that they ought to yield a little to the powerful influence of the enemies of God; they begged that the apostles would not refuse to have pity on themselves and on the faithful, and to preserve themselves for the love and the safety of the whole Church."

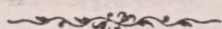
Peter waited until the plan had been fully proposed, and then replied with an air of majestic serenity:

"Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by His great mercy has brought us again into your midst. You know, brethren, how long and obstinate a struggle Simon Magus has been waging against the Church; that since the day

own time in the ceremonies of Solemn Mass. Cf. Baron., an. 45, No. 23 et seqq. It has been lately renewed by some confraternities, in the symbolical kiss of peace, given by the brethren as a sign of inviolate charity, on entering the place of meeting. For a like reason the *Pax Vobis*, the salutation used by our Lord, became the greeting of the first Christians, *Pax tecum*, and we still frequently find it on their tombs.



on which I excommunicated him in Samaria, he has been sending out false prophets and lying teachers into Syria and throughout all Asia, and has introduced these sects of perdition; you know, too, how he has led astray a great number of followers, who tread in the way of luxury, blaspheming the teachings of truth. You cannot, especially, be blind to the efforts which he is making here to raise followers and to form a party; that he is constantly on the watch to tempt with the bait of the passions such of the brethren as have lately come over from heathenism. He promises them liberty, whilst himself and his followers are slaves of corruption; and already more than one unhappy wretch, led away from the path in which he had set out, has fallen back into a worse state than that in which he was before, thus fulfilling the true saying: 'The dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow to her wallowing in the mire.' Now, is it just that I should longer allow him thus to carry on his work of perversion without restraint? Who could console me if he now should stain with blood the Roman Church, so dear to Christ; the Church without spot or wrinkle, whose faith is renowned throughout the whole world? I know well that you are kept, by the power of God, in the true faith; but I know, too, that the hour of trial is at hand, and that your faith



will be tried by fire, as gold is tried in the crucible. I know that you have noble leaders in the good fight, for I know Linus and Clement; but it is written: 'Feed my lambs;' and God says to the apostles: 'Woe to you if you do not preach!' For myself, I have the assurance that I must soon lay aside my earthly tabernacle; of necessity, therefore, must I hasten to strike, with the weapon of the Word, and break the stumbling-block. And if it please God that I should here find the one who is to bind me, as our Lord Jesus Christ foretold, and lead me whither the weak flesh would not go, may His will be done. You, as children of obedience, let not yourselves be led astray by evil desires, as when you were in ignorance; but rather submit to the pastor and bishop of your souls. Rest assured that no one shall be able to hurt us, if we are earnest in the right way; remember that the eyes of the Lord look upon the just, and His ears are always open to hear their prayers; whilst against all prevaricators, the divine wrath is ever enkindled. Therefore be wary and watch in prayer. Grace be with you all who are in Jesus Christ."*

* The discourse here ascribed to St. Peter is taken from his Epistles, sometimes literally, sometimes the sense merely. That St. Peter came to Rome at this time, to oppose Simon Magus, can be asserted with some reason, in view of the great disasters

While Peter spoke, Paul, who sat beside him, signified his assent by slightly nodding his head, and when the speaker had ended, he, too, by a motion of the hand, asked to be heard. He did not enter into a long discourse, but announced that the Holy Spirit had signified to him, too, that he should return to Rome, for that the time was near when he must bear witness to Christ before Cæsar, and receive the crown of justice. He begged them not to try to oppose his course; for that he was a victim already prepared for the sacrifice, longing for the speedy dissolution of his earthly bonds and to be with Christ.* These words of Paul, more

then brought upon the whole Church, especially in Rome, by the heresies of that magician. The holy apostle, in his second Epistle, written at this time, in the city of Rome, and probably in the house of Pudens, seems to have no other aim than to combat Simonism; the same may be said of the more or less contemporaneous letters of St. Paul, St. John, St. James and St. Jude. The same cause seems to have already brought him to Rome, the first time, under Claudius. *Petrus, secundo Claudii Imperatoris anno ad expugnandum Simonem Magum pergit*; says St. Jerome, *De vir ill*, cap I. The same testimony is gathered from the *Apostolic Constitutions*, vi, 7; or more frequently and more at length in St. Clement, *Recogn.* and *Homil.* The last three works though perhaps interpolated or attributed to doubtful authors, still are precious monuments of remote antiquity. Besides, we have the concurrent testimony of St. Filiastrio, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the *Philosophoumena* recently discovered, and many other ecclesiastical writers.

* II. Tim. iv., 6-18, written by St. Paul from the Mamertine prison, at about this time.

unequivocal still than those of Peter, seemed to lift a veil from before the eyes of the assembled brethren and displayed the imminent peril which threatened the beloved apostles; a general burst of grief was heard throughout the assembly, and the deeper because no one felt the courage to contravene the visible designs of Heaven. There seemed to be no course left but to bow submissively and trust the future to God. But when Claudia entered, with her daughters Praxedes and Pudentiana and the other members of the household, to do homage to the apostles, Peter was moved to compassion by their affectionate and bitter grief; and, wishing to appease their sorrow as far as possible, he yielded a little to their weakness, promising to remain some days concealed in the house of the Senator.*

Linus and Clement, with the other priests, were directed to renew the spirit of grace in the faithful, by moving them to prayer and fasting.† The Apostle Paul,‡ as chief speaker and leader of the word, re-

* The fatherly condescension of Peter to the faithful of Rome, is attested by St. Ambrose, *Serm. contr. Auxent*, No. 13, Ed. Migne, t. III, p. 1010; "*Christianæ animæ deprecatae sunt ut paulisper cederet. Et quamvis esset cupidus passionis, tamen contemplatione populi precantis inflexus est, &c.*"

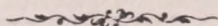
† A most ancient Roman tradition, which has, however, been often misrepresented. Cf. August, *Ep. XXXVI*, ad Casulan, No. 9, Ed. Migne, t. II, p. 145.

‡ "*Ipse (Paulus) erat dux verbi.*" Acts xiv, 11.

gardless of the plots of Simon Magus, visited with tireless zeal all the numerous churches which he had himself established as well as those which owed their foundation to Peter, besides many others which, like children of these parent churches, were springing up in every quarter of Rome. Sometimes he celebrated the Holy Mysteries in the dwelling of Aquila and Priscilla, on the Aventine, near the Fountain of the Fauns; he gave strength and comfort to that holy family of loving hosts to whom he owed his life, and they alone sufficed to form a church which might well have been proposed as a model of the Christian community;* sometimes he met the faithful at his own lodgings at the house of the pious matron Sabina, in the Via Lata, where assisted by Luke, he purified the neophytes in the miraculous fount which had sprung up at his prayer, while he dwelt there as a prisoner.† It was

* I. Cor. xvi, 19; Rom. xvi, 3-5. This dwelling, according to the old Roman tradition, stood where now rise the walls of St. Prisca's. This Priscilla, of the Aventine, must not be confounded with another Priscilla, the mother of St. Pudens, mentioned in the acts of St. Pudentiana, and who left her name to a cemetery on the Via Nomentana.

† This is the site of the present Sta. Maria in Via Lata. It is said that St. Paul dwelt in the house of Sabina on his first arrival in Rome, when he was for two years a prisoner at large (Act. xxviii, 16-31;) that St. Peter also stopped there for some time, and thence commissioned St. Martial to preach the faith



not unusual to find him in the poor quarter of the Jews, across the Tiber, singling out the lowly but loved habitations of the Christians; thence, at nightfall, he would ascend the Janiculum, and passing out at the Aurelian gate, go down to the valley at the foot of the Vatican. There among the good lime-burners, vine-dressers, potters and brick makers, celebrating the Holy Mysteries in the retreat first established by St. Peter, he wept as he listened to the sad tale of the saints murdered in the neighborhood, and now sleeping in the Vatican Cemetery or in the sand-pits of the pious Lucina, on the Aurelian Way.*

in Gaul. The water of this spring is still in great devotional esteem, as well as the picture of the B. V. painted here by St. Luke. These ancient and venerable Roman traditions have a strong intrinsic ground of belief, as there is no historical difficulty that can militate against them. We have but to consult reliable writers on ecclesiastical antiquities of Rome, especially MORONI, *Dict. &c.* Vol. XII, p. 172.

* We have reason to believe that on the Vatican, there were Christian dwellings and the lodging-place of the Apostle Peter, with a church, or rather a hall used for the meetings of the Christians; and this belief is borne out by the old Roman tradition quoted by Bosius in his *Subterranean Rome*, II, 2. This quarter was always distinguished, as it is at this day, by its brick-kilns: Ammianus Marcellinus speaks of it as inhabited by the poor, XXVII, 3; Juvenal makes it the quarter of the potters, *Sat.*, VI., V., 344; Martial assigned it to the vine-dressers, I, *Epigr.* 19: and these last two writers flourished at the time of St. Peter. It is not strange that among these

It was to him a sweet task to spend whole nights in running about to gather the faithful into their secret meetings, to exorcise those of the brethren who were troubled by evil spirits, to comfort and anoint the sick,* to pour the oil and wine of charity into the wounds of the persecuted and the needy. And he never omitted, in those perilous journeys, to enforce earnestly the necessity of penance, as a most powerful remedy in the present sufferings of the Church.

Meanwhile Peter was secretly gathering together the flower of the Roman Church amid the tombs outside of the Porta Collina, where the piety of some illustrious families and the inviolability of the cemetery, afforded the means of keeping there a Cathedral and Baptistery. Pudens himself had

poorer people the seed of the faith should have taken early root; a very propable argument is the existence there, near the circus of Nero, even as far back as the apostolic days, of the famous Vatican cemetery, excavated in the same style as the contemporaneous cemetery of Lucina (perhaps the Pomponia Græcina of Tacitus) which was cut out by the Christians on the other side of the Tiber, outside of the Janiculum or Aurelian gate. This latter cemetery afterwards bore various names and was situated in the neighborhood of the present St. Pancrace's. Here were buried Sts. Processus and Martinianus, with others of the first disciples of the Apostle St. Peter.

* James, e., 14. The other spiritual helps administered at that period are described by St. Clement in his two Epistles to Virgins, of which we shall have more to say hereafter.



estates at his disposal along the Nomentan Road.* But the Apostle made his abode, for the most part, in the Senator's palace, where the immense number of clients who daily crowded the atrium, served as a kind of cloak to the free access of the faithful. And the inner or private apartment presented a strange scene indeed, at almost every hour. At night the faithful of every condition met there to solemnize the Sacred Rites, while the day was devoted to audiences for those who had any business with the Apostle, especially to conferences for the women. The first one who presented herself was the venerable Claudia Sabinilla, leading in her two daughters, Praxedes and Pudentiana, who were already bound to perpetual virginity, and followed by her Christian freed-women and attendants. Peter, knowing by the spirit, that these were the last marks of attention that he should receive from the holy house of Pudens, received each one with every mark of esteem and love, breathing a heavenly ardor in every word that he uttered. The good old

* This accounts for the rise here of the cemetery of St. Priscilla, mother of Pudens, and near it, the one known as the Ostian, whereat according to the old tradition, St. Peter gave baptism, though the latter was probably the one now known as St. Emerentiana's not far from the celebrated cemetery and basilica of St. Agnes. *Vid.* DE ROSSI, *Roma Sotterranea*, t. L., p. 184; and the acts of St. Pudentiana, Bolland, May 19th.

man seemed never weary of speaking with the youthful Pudentiana, whom he saw, in the early bloom of less than fifteen years, already rich in multiplied merits, already ripe for Heaven, already near the time when she should fly on the wings of the dove to the bridal-chamber of her Heavenly Spouse.*

She and her sister Praxedes often passed the day in transcribing the Gospel written by Mark, for the Romans; and the pious copyists never met the detailed account of the fall of Peter, without feeling deeply moved and admiring the humility of the Prince of the Apostles who had dictated it himself.† As soon as they had finished a copy they put it by for Peter, who distributed them to the bishops whom he consecrated. It was a source of great joy to the holy young virgins to see that their labors were beneficial not only in Rome, but throughout the whole Church; for while residing with Pudens, the apostle consecrated Apollinaris for Ravenna, Romolus for Fiesole, Eutropius for Verona, Sisus for Pavia and a number of others for the Apostolic work in Sicily, Gaul, Spain, Britain and the East.

* The Acts of St. Pudentiana give her the crown of Martyrdom at the age of seventeen.

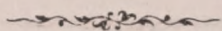
† An ancient tradition; *Vid* TILLEMONT, *Mem. Eccles.* Ed. Venet. t. II, p. 89.

Sometimes, too, they made copies of the letters written by Paul, and gave them to the families of the neophytes who lived too far from the city to attend the meetings of the faithful in which they were read. But within the last two years the persecution had enlarged their sphere of charitable labors. In the quarter where Claudia Sabinilla dwelt, the Christian matrons often met, as if for mere visits of courtesy, to consult about the dispensation of Christian charity: and there they apportioned to each one her duties in attending to the burial of such Christians as died or were martyred near their respective homes.* Claudia, for her part, sent out detachments of her Christian slaves, led by the generous freedman Eubulus,† along the Salarian and Nomentan Roads, to watch the places of daily slaughter, and provided with linen cloths in which to collect the holy relics,‡ the vessels to receive the blood, and sponges or little scrapers so as not to

* Hence we find the cemeteries of the apostolic times, and even later, nearly all named after holy women, and nothing is more common in the Acts of the martyrs, than the mention of some pious matron taking charge of the bodies of the martyrs.

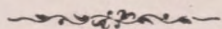
† St. Paul, II. Tim. iv. 21, mentions a Eubulus in connection with Pudens and Claudia: from which fact, in the absence of all tradition on the subject, we suppose that he must have been in some manner connected with that illustrious family.

‡ One of these cloths, stained with blood, is yearly exposed in St. Peter's. It is so exposed while we write these lines.



lose a single drop. The part which generally fell to young girls like Praxedes and Pudentiana, was to keep ready at all hours the ewers, cloths, ointments and balsam. So it often happened that they spent whole nights without closing their eyes in sleep, when the conveyances unexpectedly came in filled with the remains of those who had been slain for Christ; then the sweet rest of the virgins, together with their mother, Claudia, and their grandmother Priscilla, was to gather up the sacred relics, to wash those glorious remains, shedding tears of holy emotion and kissing the wounds hardly yet cold after the torture. Priscilla then sent them to the sand-pits on her estate, which thus received its name of Cemetery of Priscilla; or if the number was too great, the pious woman gave them a temporary resting-place in the sand-pits on their own grounds. Thus, with the immense number of martyrs furnished by that period, the pious Pudentiana did the last offices of charity to several thousands of Saints.*

* On this estate of Priscilla, or rather perhaps of Pudens, as he was her son, Priscilla herself was buried, and shortly after Pudens rested by her, to be soon followed by St. Pudentiana. In witness of the great number of Christians put to death under Nero, we refer the reader to Tacitus, *Ann XV.*, 44, where he calls the number *multitudo ingens*; and so there is nothing improbable in the tradition which says that St. Pudentiana



Amid such occupations, these lovely flowers of purity and charity were opening out in the garden of the Church, and sending abroad the sweet odor of good example; thus it was no wonder that their names were held in veneration even in the churches of distant lands, and that the noble *Apostle*, as Thecla was then sometimes called, asked them for tidings of Peter and Paul. Pudentiana, after enjoying for several days the instructions of Peter and Paul, thought it time to reply, and accordingly she thus opened her heart to her holy sister:

*“Pudentiana, daughter of Cornelius Pudens,
to Thecla, servant of God, greeting:”*

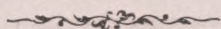
“May the peace of Jesus Christ and His holy grace ever increase in your heart, beloved sister Thecla. I reply in the name of my sister Praxedes, and of all our house which you have deigned to honor by your most precious letter. Peter and Paul are in Rome; rejoice in the Lord, for they arrived safe and unhurt, though not without much fear, on our part, because of the growing persecu-

attended to the burial of three thousand. It may be that the actual number was increased by confounding with those buried under her care, the martyrs who were deposited in the same place during the persecution of Domitian. Besides, be it remembered, that we are only writing a Legend, and not a dissertation on polemical archæology.

tion against the brethren. But of this they themselves will write to the churches of Asia; and our brother, Onesimus, who brought your letter, will be obliged to remain here until the Apostles have time to write.* I hastened to answer yours by means of my father's messenger, in order that you may not have to sigh too long for the much desired information that Paul, your master and ours in the faith, removes the prohibition upon your coming to him;† yet that you may not be exposed to the dangers of the present persecution, he recommends you to delay your journey until the next consulship. And now my father, Cornelius Pudens, directs me to offer you the hospitality of our home from this moment. What happiness for us all to be with Thecla, the martyr of Jesus Christ! Come, dearest sister, come, that I may press my lips to your scars, though I am covered with confusion at the thought that I have not yet been found worthy to suffer anything for our Saviour and our God. Here, too, you will find the strength you desire in the burning words of Paul, and the moving discourses of Peter. Hear, and learn our present happiness.

* It was at about this time that St. Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy, bishop of Ephesus, and St. Peter his second and last to the Christians in the East.

† This prohibition is mentioned in the *Acts of St. Thecla*.



“The two blessed apostles reached the house at night, all unexpected; a few hours after, they broke bread for us. Imagine our happiness. During the following days, Paul, in the order of his ministry, visited the churches of this Babylon, as Peter calls our city.* Peter remains for the present retired within our dwelling, and takes the occasion to attend to the affairs of the Saints in every part of the world. But the brethren in Rome, more than any others, feel the benefit of his presence. If you could but see the crowd! The men come at all hours, ostensibly as clients of my father, or on pretence of business with him; the matrons and the young women came as if to visit my mother, or my grandmother Priscilla; and then they are introduced into the inner apartments. We receive and entertain them until the number amounts to about fifteen or twenty with their servants or attendants. Then we give notice to our blessed Apostle, who comes to receive them in the oratory, whither we accompany them.

“The holy old man is never weary; he sits there upon his chair with his eyes raised to Heaven, while we approach, bowing low before him, our hands under our sleeves, and kiss his hand which is

* I Peter, v. 13.

generally covered by the handkerchief with which he wipes away his tears. You know already that there is hardly a moment, even when he smiles, that his face is not wet with tears. Then those who wish to consult him privately, sit down, in turn, at his right hand, while we pray for them until they kneel for the imposition of hands. When all have been heard, we gather around our father to receive his advice. He generally inquires whether any discord has arisen among us, recommends us to practice charity, and finally dismisses us with the peace of Christ. I have heard Paul say that he never witnessed such a concourse of the brethren. Every day those who had allowed themselves to be misled by the wiles of Simon the magician, come to the apostles to confess their fault; many of them who had even transcribed some of the magician's books, bring them forward and burn them before all the brethren. In a word, we now witness here what always happens in the churches when God visits them by means of his ministers.*

“What Peter does at our house here, is done in the various churches of Rome, by Paul, by Luke, Linus, Clement and the other dispensers of the

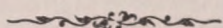
* Acts xix, 17-19. The books on magic, written by Simon and distributed among his disciples, are mentioned in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, vi, 16.



mysteries of God. You know that we have now many churches, thanks to the goodness of God, in the Via Lata, on the Aventine, the Esquiline, the Celian, across the Tiber, about the Vatican, and in many other places.* The apostles counsel fasting and prayer, and warn us to detach our hearts from the world. But I fear that I shall sadden you by this account of our great happiness. Yet these very roses have also their thorns, and one especially sharp—the blessed apostles, in their frequent exhortations to piety, give us to understand that their course is run, and they seem to be preparing to take their final leave for heaven.

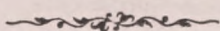
“Now that I have told you our sorrows, I may say something of our consolations, repeating the words which we heard to-day from Clement, in the presence of Peter: ‘My dear sisters,’ said the venerable pastor, ‘the possession of heaven is not to be won by eloquence, nor glory, nor noble blood, nor beauty, nor strength; nor is it to be gained by simply waiting for it; but it is carried off by those whose faith is shown in good works. But he who sighs for the sublime and happy abode of heaven, must die to the world and keep himself separated

* These churches still stand in Rome, and boast an apostolic foundation, as, for instance, St. Mary’s in Via Lata, St. Prisca’s, St. Peter’s in *Vincoli*, St. Clement’s, &c.



from it, in order to lead a heavenly and divine life, like to that of the angels, with a pure and unstained conscience. We must, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, serve Almighty God, firmly trusting to win heaven through the merits of Jesus Christ. And now if you desire to walk in the way and to reach the end of such a vocation, overcome the body, subdue the desires of the flesh, conquer the world by the Spirit of God.' Here the preacher was interrupted by the uproarious shouts and laughter of a crowd of our unhappy citizens hastening to the neighboring circus of ———. Ah! I dare not write the unholy name.* But the pious Clement, raising his voice, as if in indignation, continued: 'Overcome the perishable, the base and corrupting vanities of the world. But to overcome the dragon, the lion, the old serpent, satan, it is necessary to cling to Christ, to nourish the Spirit with heavenly teachings, and to strengthen the soul by the Holy Eucharist.'

* "Of Flora."—The Circus of Flora stood near the Patrician street and the dwelling of Pudens; some even place it upon that street, and call it, not a circus, but a theatre. *Vid*, NARDINI, *Roma Ant.*, 2d ed., p. 168. It is an established fact that the execrable Floral games occurred precisely at the season assigned to the events recorded in our legend. To-day, Rome consecrates to the most pure Virgin Mary the month of flowers formerly polluted by the Floral games.



“Then he went on to teach us how we should visit the sick, the orphans and poor widows, the possessed and the unbelievers. In fine, he ended his exhortation: ‘Courage, then, dear sisters! Let us prove ourselves true lambs of Christ’s flock, observing all justice and showing the sincerity of our faith by a pure and holy life. Take for models those who are remarkable for honesty, piety and modesty, and give them due reverence; honor also, in the Lord, our fellow-laborers. If you live thus in Christ; if, in all things, with His help, you live upright and faithful, you will be our joy, our hope, our life. Amen.’* ”

* The substance of this discourse of St. Clement is taken from his *Homilies* or *Letters to Virgins*, written at about this time or a little later. It is hardly necessary to say that we consider these letters perfectly genuine, and they have been so considered, too, by the Protestant Welsten, as finished an Oriental scholar as he was a stern opponent of the Catholic Church. He was the first to publish them, and they appeared in Syriac, in 1751. They are also received as such by many learned Catholics, up to our own contemporaries, Mohler, Zingerle, Card. de Villecourt; their genuineness has also been ably defended, not long since, by the Chevalier Beelen, in the Prolegomena to his literal translation and splendid Syro-Latin edition, Louvain, 1856, 4to. The ceremony which we have described as taking place in the assembly held by the Apostle Peter, is thus described by Clement himself in these letters, ii. 4:—“We assemble them all in one place, on the right hand, and question them on their conduct. According to what they communicate to us concerning their interior, we exhort them in appropriate terms and like

“The blessed Peter showed his approval of these last words of his faithful minister by look and gesture. We felt as if renewed and re-invigorated by the primitive grace which we had received from the Holy Ghost in baptism. How should I love to listen to such words sitting beside you, to have my

God-fearing men. When they are all gathered together and quiet we make them a little discourse with the fear of God, and read them the Scriptures,” &c. Now this gathering together all the women in one place, placing them on the right of the Minister of God to give an account of their interior, and receive the proper advice, then the discourse in common, &c., looks to us like a striking comment upon these words of the Acts, xix, 18: “And many of those who believed (πεπιστευκότων) came confessing and declaring their deeds.”

In short, St. Clement here refers to the manner of hearing the confessions of women at the time of St. Peter and St. Paul. This passage receives additional light from a similar one of St. Basil (Reg. Brev. 110; ed. Migne, t. III, p. 1157) where it is also enjoined that the canonesses should make their confession in the presence of the oldest of their number; this seems to confirm the opinion of the learned Marchi, that the chairs which he found cut into the tufa of the Catacombs, were used for confessionals. *Vid. his Archit. Christ.* pp. 130 and 182, where he speaks of excavations made in the cemeteries between the Salarian and Nomentan Roads, and which evidently date back to the days of the Apostles; it is not at all improbable that they are, according to Rossi, *Roma Sotterr.* t. 1, p. 184, the chairs “ubi prius sedit Sanctus Petrus, ubi Petrus baptizabat.” As to the rite of kneeling, at least for the absolution, we find it mentioned in the well known passage of Tertullian: “Confession is a discipline in which man prostrates and humbles himself . . . to weep, to kneel to the priest, and before the friends of God.”



coldness dispelled by the warmth of your devotion. But if it is not allowed you to come now in person to Rome, I certainly fly toward you with all my heart. I give you, in spirit, the kiss of holy love, as do also my sister Praxedes and the other sisters of the household. Receive also the greetings of Aurelia Petronilla, a most dear daughter of St. Peter.* May the grace of Jesus Christ increase in your heart."

Pudentiana, before sealing the letter, went with her sister, to read it to their mother. Claudia, after listening to the reading, said: "My dear children, you would do well to put off sending it, for I much fear that you may soon have a sad postscript to add to it."

"What, mother?"

"I can hardly tell you; but I see Peter more thoughtful than ever, and he hardly speaks of anything but the great woes of the Church and the danger of Paul. The porter tells me that to-day messengers have come to Peter in great numbers; so many, in fact, that one hardly waited till the

* St. Petronilla, or Aurelia Petronilla, to whom an altar is dedicated in St. Peter's, was not a daughter of the Apostle, according to the flesh, but in the Spirit, as is now well ascertained. The illustrious archeologist, DE ROSSI, makes her a Roman lady and perhaps a member of the Flavian house. *Vid.* his *Bullet. Archeol. Christ. an.* III. pp. 22, 39, 46.

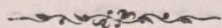
other had done. I feel an interior conviction that something unusual must have happened; besides, Peter has directed that the number of seats for the assembly be doubled."

"It is true," said Praxedes, "that for some days Paul has not been seen: perhaps he has fled."

"God grant it!" answered Claudia.

The little maidens did not venture to question their mother further, and so they remained seated in silence on their little stools at her feet. Pudentiana held the letter in her hand, and she alternately bowed her head in thought, then raised it, and turned her eyes upon her mother, like one who fears and yet desires to learn the solution of some doubt. Claudia perceived her trouble of mind, and said to her daughters: "Go, my children, and see to the dining-hall; take care that the bread be fresh, and twice as plentiful as usual."

Praxedes set to work to knead the dough, while Pudentiana prepared the oratory for the meeting of that night. She covered the wooden table with a clean white cloth and without the help of any of the slaves, disposed the benches for the men and women separately; she placed the desk for the homily, in its proper place; then, as on account of long disuse, because of Peter's absence, its gold and ivory ornaments were somewhat tarnished, she



busied herself in carefully polishing everything. This throne was the only precious article of furniture in that retired sanctuary; for, in the beginning, before he had baptized all the members of the family, Peter was unwilling that any of them should incur the suspicion of holding social meetings in this part of the mansion, by the appearance of costly furniture there. But he could not refuse the gift offered by Pudens of the chair of state, that he might appear with proper dignity before the assembled faithful, especially in the consecration of bishops. Pudentiana now diligently examined every part of the episcopal chair, dusting carefully the back, the arms, the seat, and each of the miniature pilasters with the cross-pieces which support the seat. She was particularly desirous to give a special polish to the three little wooden columns and the bars which were meant to support the arms, and she accordingly took great pains to dust into the almost hidden recesses of the little arches supported by the columns just mentioned, and which rose up gracefully to support, in turn, the finely carved and open-worked mouldings that crowned the back of the chair. Then the ivory ornaments remained. For these she took a fine sponge and Marseilles soap, and began with the raised work which adorned the back of the chair; proceeded thus along the arms

and seat, and carefully following all the intricate mazes of the carving and moulding, with their rich profusion of flowers, figures of men and animals and many other cunning devices, all surrounded by a broad band of raised leaves and flowers. But the most tedious part of the work was in the eighteen beautiful panels which adorn the lower part of the chair, in front, for here it was necessary to take note of every line of raised work and of every intaglio of the storied panels as well as of the cornices which framed and separated them. In this long and tedious work the holy child was obliged to dwell upon each of the fancifully wrought monsters created by the imagination of pagan poets, the extravagant mythology of Hercules forming the chief subject of the designs, and as she came to each in turn, she felt her indignation renewed at these infamous superstitions of idolatry, and sometimes, as if to insult satan, she addressed him almost aloud: "It well becomes, thee, to be made the footstool of the servants of the Lord! Against thee it was written that we shall trample upon the lion and the dragon!" At length having restored the sheen of the gold facings upon the chair and the raised figures, for it had become somewhat tarnished by long disuse, she finished her work by brightening

the four rings intended to receive the bars of the bearers by whom the chair was carried.*

The pious little maiden, having finished her fatiguing task, as if divining that this chair would one day be an object of veneration to the whole Christian world and the glory of Rome, knelt with clasped hands, and after kissing the wood, prayed to God: "Blessed be God our Father, who has granted that Peter should sit here and teach us the truth!"

Here she was interrupted by the entrance of a female servant, whom Claudia had sent for her.

"Lady Pudentiana," said the maid, "when you have finished here, your mother awaits you."

Her mother had sent for her to attend the evening meal.

After nightfall the brethren began to assemble in greater numbers than usual: they seemed frightened and uncertain on account of the distressing rumors

* The table upon which tradition makes St. Peter to have celebrated the holy mysteries in the house of Pudens, is still preserved, part in the church of St. Praxedes and part in the Lateran Basilica. The throne is the one which is venerated in the Vatican Basilica, where it is raised upon a splendid frame in the Apsis. It has all the richness and variety of ornament of which we have but sketched an outline here, and it bears the marks of its period, as Card. Wiseman has well remarked.

which generally prevailed. Peter seating himself as usual, for the homily, began: "Brethren, the days of the great tribulation have come upon us. Paul is imprisoned in the Mamertine by order of Cæsar." Here he was interrupted by a general and irrepressible outburst of sighs, sobs and tears. But he soon continued: "Pray that God may be appeased in our regard and may break the chains of our fellow-disciple: pray that he may give us strength to check the scandals of the enemy of the Church, who seems to-day to triumph in his rage. Go in peace."

Peter could say no more. His heart was overflowing with grief. And yet the imprisonment of Paul was but the first gust of the coming storm.





CHAPTER IV.

THE STRUGGLE.

THE day which followed the seizure of St. Paul the Apostle, was one of cruel joy for the numerous followers of Simon Magus. Circumcised and proselytes, all crowded around his splendid residence across the Tiber, and hailed him as they would a conqueror. Many of his female disciples also came, with a great parade of litters and retinues, to congratulate Helen, the wife of Simon, and to beg, as a favor, to be admitted to the private oratory, there to burn some grains of incense before the pictures of Simon and of Helen, which were raised above the altar, in the semblance of Jupiter and Minerva.* This shameless woman,

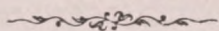
* It is certain that Simon Magus claimed divine honors and received adoration, in various forms, from Jews and Gentiles. Besides the fact that the Acts offer a manifest ground for this assertion, we have the direct testimony of the Fathers and ancient writers: St. Justin, Martyr, St. Epiphanius, St. Irenæus,

filled with pride, incessantly importuned her too willing partner to finish with Peter also, that he might rule his crowd of adorers without opposition. Little as Simon needed such incitements, he still delayed because he hoped to defeat Peter in some public contest, and thus to bring contempt upon the Christ whom he preached.* In the meantime he gave his attention to the increase of his party. Over his disciples he exercised an irresistible and absolute sway, after dementing them by means of two powerful drugs, the weaker of which was surpassed only by the other. He first caught them with the magical wonders which he had at his finger ends; then he bound them to him by ties of the most execrable obscenity for which he had ample means in his secret assemblies.†

the *Philosophumena*, Eusebius, &c. The last named writer (Hist. Eccl. II, 13) confirms the fact of the adoration given to the courtesan Helen, which had already been asserted by St. Irenæus, *Contra hæres.* I, 23; and, in nearly the same terms, the *Philosophumena*, lately brought to light, say—Lib. VI, ch. I, 20; Paris Ed. 1860, p. 266—that the Simonians “have a representation of Simon in the form of Jupiter, and one of Helen in that of Minerva; these they adore, styling the former *Lord*, the latter *Lady*.”

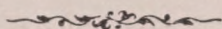
* This is easily gathered from the teachings and facts commonly attributed to him, and it is clearly shown in the writings of St. Clement; among others, in his *Recognitiones*.

† Cf. ACT. VIII, 10, 11; IREN. *Contr. heres.* I., 23; the *Philosophumena*, VL, I., 19; and even more clearly, EUSEB.



Among the Christians, on the other hand, all was mourning, weeping and consternation; they lamented the fate of Paul, and feared a similar one for Peter. Entrance to the palace was open to the magician; the favor of Nero was his support in the most disgraceful acts, the courtiers showed him the obsequious respect due to the emperor's intimate friend and the minister to his pleasures. Everything seemed to threaten the destruction of Peter; the only step that now remained to be taken was that Simon, tired of his unequal contest, should avail himself of his unlimited power at court, to demand the blood of the apostle. "And what hope can there be that he will not demand it?" asked the Christians of one another; "if he reflects that Peter is daily thwarting and making useless all his machinations, that Peter snatches from his grasp his hardly-initiated victims, that Peter, by daily miracles, outshines his glory, that Peter makes war upon him even into the inmost recesses of the palace." Some of the more fearful and timid suggested: "Oh! if Peter would but yield a little to the

Hist. Eccl. II., 13. Such always has been and always will be the case, from the proto-heresiarch Simon, through Arius, Luther, Henry VIII., to the modern Saint Simonians, Fourierists, Mormons, Spiritualists, and whatever other sects may yet spring from these.

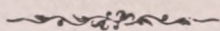


pressure of the times, and withdraw among the brethren at Ferentino, or to some retired villa in Campania!"*

But Peter, whose heart was a stranger to any such timid counsel, was preparing to renew the war, or rather the never-interrupted battle, and openly to present himself alone, to the whole fury of the storm. He well knew what hand had wrought the misfortune of Paul, and how his fellow-apostle had dared to win, from the very arms of Cæsar, his favorite concubines, to restore them to the honor of Christian modesty; he knew that this had given Simon a pretext for accusing him before the emperor; he knew that all the palace was strongly moved by hatred of himself; and yet, far from withdrawing from the field, he still expected to gain ground, and meanwhile multiplied his victories.† And yet Simon, blinded by his success, no longer troubled by the voice of Paul, was exulting with fiendish joy at the thought of his splendid stroke, and the prospect of setting up his divine character on a solid foundation. He had, with deep and

* Even the Church of Ferentino has a very credible tradition of having received the faith in the days of the Apostles, though indeed it is not generally recorded among the many Churches founded by St. Peter.

† Ancient and well grounded traditions warrant this statement. Cf. Baronius, an. 68, No. 25.



searching perspicuity, studied the economy of Christ, and now he was striving to imitate the triumphant work of Jesus of Nazareth, presenting himself as the object of the prophecies, and counterfeiting His actions, teachings and miracles.* But with his usual consummate cunning he took care to smooth the way for all his followers, to flatter their belief, and to foster their passions; in a word, he never spoke to any class of persons but in a manner and tone of studied kindness.

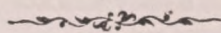
He introduced himself into the dwellings of the new converts of the apostles, putting on an outward appearance of great devotion, expressing great pity for their austere and self-sacrificing mode of life and repeating with great apparent piety that "God had showed His compassion for the world and on various occasions blessed it by his visitation, ever dispensing his benefits with a liberal hand and great condescension to human frailty. That the person of the Eternal Father had been manifest to the Samaritans, and that their law was somewhat harsh

* There appeared, on the part of many, an impious ambition to pass for the Messiah, or divine person incarnate, and to counterfeit Jesus Christ. Vid. Orig., *Tract. XXVII, sup. Matt.*, and *Contr. Cels.*, VI, 11; VII, 9. Of Simon, in particular (*Id. cont. Cels.* V, 62,) he says: "He hoped that, if he could but do works similar to those of Jesus, he might gain from men what Christ had obtained."

and austere; the Christian law, given to the Jews by the Son, who had become man for their sake, seemed to be a little milder; that finally the divine Paraclete had come down from heaven for the consolation of the world. As for himself he asked no other honor than the honor due to God; they might call him by whatever name they pleased, but they must know that, in all these incarnations of the divine person he himself was the ONE WHO IS, the great power of God, shown to the world under various forms, in a word the Being without beginning or end.* His law was a sweet yoke; they had but to love God and unite themselves in spirit to the Supreme Being; all the other precepts of the law could be set aside by the true believers in the Holy Ghost, as the Mosaic precepts had been antiquated in favor of the believers in the Son. They should believe in Jesus Christ as a holy man and a prophet; but they should also trust no less in him, for he was the promised Spirit, and the bearer of the full revelation.† Hence," he concluded, "I have sent forth my apostles, not a paltry dozen, but a

* IRENÆUS, *Contr. heres.* I, 23; and from him, THEODORETUS, *Heret. Fav.* I, 1; *Act.* VIII, 10; *Recognit.* III, 47; *Epit. of the acts of Peter*, No. 25, (among the works of St. Clement, Ed. Migne vol. VII, p. 492;) *Philosophum.*, VI, I, 19.

† *Apostolic Constitutions*, VI, 10.



good thirty, as a sign of greater mercy. Men should know that the time was past for rigorous laws, that the soul had nothing to fear in the last judgment, and, provided faith remained, any satisfaction of the natural appetite was lawful; no more fasts, no more vain fear of meats offered in sacrifice, no more unnatural continence; but a pure love and liberty of the sons of God.* Even idolatry, to which are attached so many vain fears of punishment, is not forbidden to him who keeps a living faith within his heart.† Turn to Helen, the sovereign apostle, a truly divine work, a child of God, sent for the purification of the world. Under her guidance and teaching you shall know the true light. I withdrew her from dishonor and sanctified her with my own hand, for I discerned, at once, her divine origin; revere her, for blessed is he who believeth in her.”‡

Then he would adroitly discover whether they had, by chance, any of “those letters which Mark had circulated among the Roman knights,” (meaning the Gospel of St. Mark;) and he generally

* *Recognit.* II, 8; *Const. Apost.* VI, 10; *IREN. Contr. heres.* I, 23.

† *ORIG. Contr. Cels.* VI, 11.

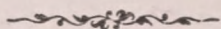
‡ *Recognit.* II, 8; *IREN. ubi sup.*; *JUSTIN I, Apol.* No. 26; *Philosophum.* VI, I, 19.

managed to get possession of them if they had any, giving them, in exchange, what he called a precious volume containing the essence of the sacred writings, and abrogating all other teaching. "Read the *great explanation*; this is the new gospel, the supreme apocalypse; here is the word of God!"*

Such was the language of the impostor when speaking to Christians; but with the Hebrews he knew still better how to suit his words to their traditions. If they were Samaritans, he spoke in the highest praise of the worship on Mount Gerizim, he recounted the many wonders wrought by himself in Samaria, the incredible number of disciples he had left there with altars and temples dedicated to his name.† Then to remove from their minds all remembrance of the defeats he had suffered there in his contests with the Apostles, he always added that he had consented to meet Peter only to dispel the effects of his magic arts and to confound his

* The *great explanation* or *great negation* (ἀποφάσις μεγάλη) is frequently quoted in the *Philosophumena* (Lib. VI, c. 1,) as the principal production of the Simonian intellect. It would seem that the magician, jealously anxious to have his historians, as well as Jesus Christ, opposed this work and name to the gospel or good tidings.

† "Nearly all the Samaritans acknowledge Simon as their first God, and adore him." Justin, 1st Apol. christ. No. 26. *Vide*, also the works attributed to St. Clement I, Pope, *Homil.* II, 22.



malice.* When, on the other hand, he found himself arguing with some good Israelite, one without guile or double-dealing, he managed to entangle his hearer in a long and elaborate discussion about Sarah of old, whose son he claimed to be, not indeed by any human father, but of divine origin. Here he would detail the incidents of his childhood passed amid the tents of Jacob and the prodigies attending his youthful growth, incidents all of an order above the wonderful and beyond any possibility of rational belief.† Yet he could quote, in support of all these assertions, passages of the Scriptures which he seemed to know by heart from beginning to end. And though he seemed chiefly concerned about those of his own race, yet he did not neglect the Gentiles. With them he took quite a different turn; appeared in the dark colored mantle and with the dialect of the Attic philosopher,‡ and a Platonic style of conversation.

He established his academy amid the quiet

* *Recognit.* III, 46.

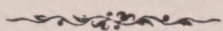
† *Ib.* and more at length, II, 9.

‡ We believe that, in Rome, he endeavored to pass for a Greek, or, at least, was considered as such by some; this conjecture we found upon these lines of JUVENAL, *Sat.* III, 80:

“Ad summam, non Manurus erat neque Sarmata nec Thrax.”

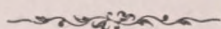
“Qui sumpsit pennas, mediis sed natus Athenis.”

Which we believe to have reference to Simon Magus. But we shall again have occasion to consider this question.



shades of some villa on the "Slope of Cinna," or near the Nomentan Road; and there, seating himself beneath a plane tree,* after the manner of the "divine Plato," he lost himself in theories far transcending the vulgar comprehension, and soared aloft even into the sphere of the Incomprehensible Being. And wandering aloft, sometimes, amid those inaccessible clouds, he began to discourse about himself, declaring that he had come down from heaven for the restoration of blinded human intellect, for which he had clothed himself with the highest wisdom; that Helen was that hidden wisdom, already adored under the name of Minerva, who had several times before appeared to the world, but always unrecognized by wretched mortals. She had appeared in ancient times, the Helen who had wrapped both Greeks and Trojans in the flames of war, and men did not discern beneath her dazzling beauty, the divine ray that lingered there; she was the mother of many intelligent spirits who should have accompanied her as their queen, but who, on the contrary, had shown but aversion for her as for a hated step-mother; "well was it for Helen," he continued, "that my eye fell upon her at the critical

* "In Rome . . . sitting beneath a plane tree, he taught." Is the direct evidence of the *Philosophumena*, Lib. VI, cap. I, No. 20.



moment of her downward course. I rescued her, that precious gem, from the mire, and placed her upon the altar which she has merited, by giving her the hand of a husband. Give her then, the incense which is due to her; to me enough has already been given. Syria, Palestine and Ionia already offer sacrifice to Simon.”*

It would be hard to believe the effect which such reasonings produce, among the ignorant, and among those who, for their own destruction, were learned in the monstrous theogonies of Hesiod and Homer, or more recently fed on the still more extravagant fables produced by the great favorite of Augustus, Caius Julius Hyginus. But nearly always (it seemed by chance, but it was providential,) Simon Magus had hardly time to begin his work anywhere when Simon Peter appeared. Peter also knew how to adapt his tone and manner to cultivated circles and to ignorant individuals; he too wore a grave expression, yet without the least assumption of prophetic or oracular wisdom; he only asked to

* This supposition that Simon varied his errors according to circumstances of time and person, seems to offer the only means of reconciling the apparent contradictions which are attributed to him in the writings of St. Clement, in the *Philosophumena* and in the other Hereseologists of antiquity. Certainly it was not likely that he would speak of the Homeric Helen to the Jews.

be heard, and then by the powerful arguments of his supernatural philosophy, he refuted the lies spread by Simon Magus, and made their absurdity palpably evident. Then insensibly passing from the dialectic discourse to the evangelical sermon, he preached Jesus Christ crucified; he proclaimed aloud the coming of the awful judgment which God has placed at the end of all things, between time and eternity, as a curb and a check to momentary disorders, the beginning and the consummation of an infinite order.

The hearers felt themselves compelled to yield a deep admiration; they compared the empty words of the crafty magician with the discourse of the Jewish sage; they looked at one another in astonishment and then exclaimed, according to the spirit that moved them: "That Cynic knows how to play his dice!" It is true that there were not wanting weak heads to cry out: "Good! you want to make all dogs like yourself!"—"No, he is not a cynic, he is one of those emissaries of Chrestus, escaped from the stake: away with him to the fire!"—"Pretty talk, by Hercules! But your much knowledge has turned your head."—"Stuff and nonsense of the circumcised! Let him sleep off that new wine! stand out of the way, or you may get the benefit of some of it now!" Then the crowd

would laugh and jeer. But Peter never lost a particle of his spirit or self-possession, but went on with his discourse, which he seldom finished without having drawn over some new disciple who came to him in secret and, with true compunction of heart, asked: "Philosopher, what must I do?"*

If the Apostle discovered that Simon had gained entrance into the Synagogues, as often happened, he never failed to appear there himself at the next assembly. Taking up the volume of the law, he opened it, and he knew well where to find the fitting texts, then in a few words, but words of fire, he crushed the heresies of Simon Magus, showing by unanswerable proofs that he could not be the promised Messiah; "that Simon was nothing more than a strolling vagabond, a vile slave of Satan

*It must be borne in mind that it was a Roman custom, very common at this time, for philosophers to appear in the libraries, the baths and even in private dwellings, to discourse on moral subjects; even Augustus used to listen to the *aretalogi*, or declaimers on virtue, with great favor, even over his cups. Suet. *Octav.* 74. We know, from the Acts, how the apostles availed themselves of this custom of their time, to preach Jesus Christ, and often even the last judgment. We learn too what was the effect of their words; "His auditis compuncti sunt corde et dixerunt ad Petrum; 'Quid faciemus?' Stupebant autem omnes. . . . Alii autem irridentes dicebant; 'quia musto pleni sunt isti.' . . . 'In modico suades me Christianum fieri.' . . . 'Multæ te litteræ ad insaniam convertunt;'" and many other passages bear the same witness.

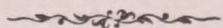
from whom he received his magic powers.”* Then turning to the true Christ, he passed in quick review the promises of the patriarchs and of the prophets, showed them all perfectly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and concluded: “Sons of the prophets and heirs of the Testament, now is the time to do penance; receive the baptism of Jesus Christ, for there is no other name in heaven or on earth, by which you may hope for salvation.”† Sometimes, rapt in a spirit of prophecy, he raised his voice, and exclaimed in tones of solemn warning: “Brethren! trust not to the future! Soon, all that is around you now, will be leveled with the ground. Already I see it! A powerful enemy is coming down upon the walls of Sion with avenging arms; famine, bondage, ruin, desolation follow in his train. Jerusalem, thou shalt weep as thou didst rejoice at the sight of the sufferings inflicted upon the Son of God.”‡

At this awful threat the whole multitude arose in a tumult, the Rabbins, the fathers and mothers of

* Such are the words quoted from St. Peter in the works ascribed to St. Clement, *passim*.

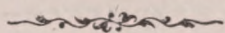
† The sermons of St. Peter, of St. Paul and of St. Stephen, turn mostly upon this great truth; cf., Act. II, III, IV, V, VII, XIII, &c.

‡ This prophecy of St. Peter is quoted by LACTANTIUS, *Div. Just.* IV, 21.



the Synagogue,* all rushed upon him in anger as if he had blasphemed, and it is not easy to say where their madness would have stopped had they not been restrained by the fear of the laws and the recent displays of severity on the part of Claudius Cæsar. But the most fearful scene was presented when the magician, in the midst of his discourse, saw his dreaded rival appear at the entrance of the Synagogue. Then the false wretch, possessed at once by terror and madness, trembled in every limb, his mouth was covered with foam, he addressed him directly in a tone of furious invective, striving desperately to crush him in the coils of his serpent-like dialectics. Peter allowed him to talk at will, to writhe and disgorge his venom ; then, in a few words and without effort, opening out his fallacious windings, he lashed him unsparingly with his triumphant reasoning, until the poor wretch felt the words he would utter broken within his own teeth, and like a serpent trodden under foot, he swallowed his own poison in the trembling silence of rage and despair. Such was the inexpressible majesty which surrounded the person of the Apostle, such the expression of divine power reflected upon his

* Father and mother of the Synagogue, were titles of honor given to those who had deserved well of the Jewish community. Vid. ORELLI, *Inscript*, No. 2522.



countenance, that the necromancer, though he made the most desperate efforts to take up his adversary's arguments, could find nothing to furnish matter for a new discourse, and he ended by violently breaking off the conference with threats and challenges to a trial of magic skill. Generally, he turned his back upon the Apostle and with a hoarse roar, exclaimed: "Old bald-head, at the first occasion you shall not want a slave's cross!"*

Though so repeatedly overcome and conquered, Simon still continued to enjoy a high reputation amongst his followers who were blinded by the fascination of his charms. Even Nero hung upon his words, and carried his admiration to such lengths that he did not hesitate to erect a statue in his honor, with the inscription: "TO SIMON THE HOLY GOD,"† and he was very near dedicating a temple

* That such personal encounters took place between Simon Peter and Simon Magus is testified in many passages of the works of St. Clement, of doubtful authenticity indeed, but certainly very ancient; and we find them mentioned in many of the ancient Fathers. In the *Philosophumena* (VI, I, 20) it is said that Simon, "while in Rome had encounters with the Apostles. Peter stoutly resisted him," &c. The same is said by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* II, 14.

† The existence of this statue in Rome, "*between the two bridges*," that is, on the island in the Tiber, is attested by St. JUSTIN, I, *Apol.* No. 26; as also by several other ancient writers; Eusebius, St. Augustin and others. It is certain that in times nearer to our own, while Gregory XIII occupied the



and offering up sacrifices to him, as had already been done in other places. The magician used, as an instrument of his art, a figure of a little boy, whom he swore that he had formed, not of earth, like the first man, but, by a display of greater power, of pure air; and then having, of his full and divine power, killed him, he kept his image for his own greater glory.* The fact is that, with this little picture in his hand, he could conjure up spirits, and make them appear in the secret assemblies of his initiated followers, especially in the presence of the Emperor Nero.†

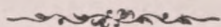
Pontifical throne, a pedestal was found bearing the inscription: SEMONI DEO FIDIO SANCO SACRUM; from which some pretend to show that Justin was certainly guilty of a mistake. But such is not the case. The existence of this statue does not render impossible the existence of the other, and we do not believe it possible that that most learned man was unable to read large capitals on marble by no means old, set up in a much frequented place, so as to read *Simoni* for *Semoni Sanco*, a well-known divinity; besides all the remaining context of the inscription to the *Deus Fidius*, with which we are acquainted, (vid. ORELLI, n. 1858,) would eventually have warned him of his mistake. The learned Father Seb. Sanguineti, treats of this question briefly, though fully, in his excellent work, *De Sede Romana B. Petri*, p. 104 et seqq. Rome, Camerale, 1867, 8vo.

* *Recognit*, II, 13, 15.

† This is true necromancy properly so called. It is attributed to Simon not only by the Clementine books (loc. cit.) but also by TERTULLIAN, *De Anima*, c. 57, where the description would perfectly suit one of our modern spiritualist exhibitions.

At other times, as he followed Cæsar through the halls of the palace, or formed part of his train as he surveyed the endless galleries of the Golden House, he would suddenly stop, and with his diabolical power give motion to the surrounding statues, which bent forward on their pedestals as if to do homage to their master, to the indescribable awe of Nero. When invited to the imperial table, he could, at the moment when others least expected it, raise a blast of wind which threatened to do considerable damage to the imperial plate, until amid the clatter and ringing of golden goblets, glass and gems, the food was raised up without any help of visible hands and offered to the guests; then suddenly some closed door was thrown open, to give entrance to a train of graceful and beautiful forms, which gathered up the table service and replaced it on the side-board; then, at a sign from the magician, they grew pale, and vanished in thin air.*

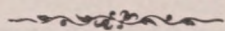
* At the recital of these performances of Simon Magus, some unreflecting persons will perhaps smile incredulously. We do not give them as indisputable facts of history; but we strongly maintain their possibility. The demon can certainly produce such illusions. The Sacred Scriptures (for we are speaking to the believers,) record some similar ones, effected by the magicians in Egypt, and by the witch of Endor. Let the reader, moreover, bear in mind that our necromancer here is the one of whom it was said: *Cui auscultabant omnes a minimo usque*



Astounded at such display of power, Nero set no bounds to his veneration for the divinity seated at his table, and he began to caress him almost like a suppliant, begging for himself some knowledge of such a wonder-working philosophy.

“Tell me, divine magician,” he would say, “what you wish from me? I am ready at your nod; do you wish for gold? My treasure is open

ad maximum dicentes: Hic est Virtus Dei, quæ vocatur Magna. Attendebant autem ei, propter quod multo tempore magiis suis dementasset eos. Act. VIII, 10, 11. There is no improbability, therefore, in saying that his actions in this line were wonderful. Wonderful, certainly, are those which are attributed to him in the *Recognit.* and in the Homilies ascribed to St. Clement, and which we have here mentioned in part; still they do not pass the bounds of belief, and it has seemed to us not unsafe to quote them since they are found in an old work of much learning. Gallaudio, a competent judge, places the *Recognitiones* in the end of the second century, and the *Homilies* in the middle of the third century. We incline to the opinion that they are works of the apostolic days, and from the pen of St. Clement whose name they bear, though interpolated and altered. Besides, all the ancient ecclesiastical writers, including the lately discovered *Philosophumena*, speak of Simon Magus as a conjurer and a wizard. Finally we have seen too many examples of the same kind in our own day, under the various names of mesmerism, animal magnetism, spiritualism, &c. Is it not probable that M. Hume has been giving the same style of exhibitions at the Tuilleries as did Simon Magus at the court of Nero? Wonderful to say! call it *witchcraft*, and the modern philosophers are incensed and treat the expression as absurd; call it *spiritualism*,—they are silent and arch their brows in astonishment. Poor critics!



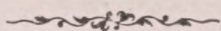
to you. Do you desire human victims? infants at the breast? young virgins? All are ready for the knife. Provided only I can penetrate the secret plots of my enemies, foresee the future, and exert some power over the divinities, I shall have reached my highest ambition.”*

And the sorcerer smiling, replied: “All this, with more and better knowledge I will teach you, divine Cæsar, when you shall have passed through the inferior grades of the science. But first I must show you the full power of my arm.”

Then rising and standing in the middle of the banqueting-hall, surrounded by an infernal flame which played around his person, he stretched out his hand and said:

“I can, yes, I can at will make myself invisible to any one from whom I wish to conceal myself; if I wish to fly, the mountains will open to give me passage; should I cast myself down from a high place, the heavenly spirits would bear me on

* Nero’s passion for witchcraft and the magic art, the numbers of human victims slain, the entertainments with the magician, are historical facts. Vid. Suet. *Nero*, 34, 56; and more at length Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* XXX, 5, 7. The intimacy between Nero and Simon is attested by the author of the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, (II, 2,) a work attributed by some to Hegesippus, by others to St. Ambrose. Vid. *Op. St. Amb.* Ed. Migne, t. i. p. 2068.

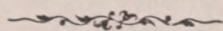


unhurt to the ground; fire has no harmful heat for me, though I should pass through the midst of its flames; at my nod new woods spring up from the earth; nature decks my path with new flowers and new plants; it is in my power to assume whatever form I please; the very way to heaven is known to me as well as the paths of earth. He does well who raises statues to me and adores me.”*

Amid the smiles of fortune now so plentifully showered upon him, the demoniacal wizard felt a sharp pang in his heart, an unrelenting torment which he strove in vain to escape—it was the successive triumphs of the Apostles of the true Christ. He could indeed soothe this malignant rage with the thought that Paul was already removed, and devoted to the axe; but he could not reconcile himself to the sight of Peter, so nobly replacing Paul in the heat of the battle, that he seemed to multiply himself a hundred-fold to prepare all, to meet all, to overcome all, and yet never giving any clue by which to discover the hidden ways to his place of abode. His followers would sometimes assert, in their secret meetings, that they had surprised Peter wandering near the Septi Julii in the Broad street;†

* The very words ascribed to Simon Magus, in the *Recognit.* II, 9.

† At the house of Sabina, where now stands Sta. Maria in Via



others said that they had met him strolling about the heights of the Aventine above the Circus Maximus.

“Take care!” replied the magician to all these disclosures; “that is an old trick of our enemies and of those apostate Jews” (meaning the families of Aquila and Priscilla).

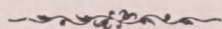
“And I have seen him,” added another, “crossing the Tiber near the Mausoleum of Augustus, then hurrying through dark by-ways along the fields of Cincinnatus.”*

“And I,” pursued yet another, “have found him at a late hour, wandering like a restless spirit, behind the enclosure of Nero’s circus: I tried to track him unperceived: but he turned back toward the Cestian bridge, crossed over to the alleys of the other side of the Tiber, and I lost sight of him.”

At length one of the wealthiest of the Hebrew matrons, who was known as a Mother of the Synagogue, said, as if pouring out the sorrow of her heart, “If things go on in this way, our synagogues will soon be closed. Already the one on the

Lata. The Septi Julii correspond very nearly to the Doria Palace.

* Now the Porto di Ripetta toward the plain of Castello, where once stood the modest farm of Quinctius Cincinnatus. Liv. III, 26. Thence across the Cornelian and Triumphal Roads, the road led to the valley of the Vatican.



Esquiline is forsaken, that of the Porta Capena almost empty,* and”

“And why? and how?”

“Cephas is emptying them for us.”

At this Simon could contain himself no longer, and looking angrily around upon his followers, he exclaimed:

“Villains, wretches are they all who receive him into the synagogues! Impious and mad, they who hear him! They ought to bind him and send him to me dead or alive! But no! It were better that I should first confound him; that I should make him a laughing-stock, and cause him to blush with shame for once at least! As for you, it is enough that you shut your ears against his perfidious enchantments.”

“How can we?” asked the matron. “He fascinates you by his very look, his countenance and gesture. His eye is fire, his voice thunder. He cannot be resisted. Did I not see him walking about through our quarter, at the foot of the Janiculum? Everybody knew him, and yet no one dared to touch him.”

“Vile recreants!”

“Worse yet; many invited him into their houses,

* Cf. DE ROSSI, *Bollett archeol. crist.*; an. III, p. 89.

took him to the bed-side of the sick; mothers brought him their lame children to be charmed."

"And he?"

"He went in boldly, signed them all with his magic signs, and left them sound but bewitched. Alas for the house of Jacob, if the Power of God (meaning Simon Magus who stood before her,) does not help it!"

"Nay, I will come to its assistance," said the impostor, "I will help it, and I will be the ruin of the Christian faction. What can Peter hope for in this city of Rome which is already mine? Here I have statues raised in my honor, I command the fears of Cæsar, I shall soon have temples and altars; and then I shall be ready to close, with satisfaction, my mortal career. But first I have determined to dishonor and thus to crush this beggarly Galilean, who in every part of the world disputes my claims to the homage of incense; he shall meet his end in Rome. But I cannot yet understand why they do not drive him out of their houses like a mad dog. What can he promise to the Romans? To the rich he says: 'Make yourselves poor;' to the poor: 'Kiss your rags;' to those oppressed by tyrants: 'Obey;' to slaves: 'Rivet your own chains;' to ladies: 'Cast aside your jewels, deprive yourselves of every sensual satisfaction;' to all: 'Fast, watch,

die to the pleasures of the world.' Fool! and does he think, with this, to make head against the Paraclete, the bearer of joy and of liberty. I shall ferret him out of his lurking-places, were he even hidden in the bowels of the earth. Now I know that he has forsaken the dwellings of the rich to move about amid the dirty rabble of the Vatican quarter; but darkness is day to my eyes; as I found Paul so shall I find Cephas. But their blood is not enough; no, I must first enjoy their disgrace, their defeat; I must drink deep draughts of vengeance; then heaven awaits me, there I shall return."

The assembly rose up; they adored the magician and then cried out: "Death to Cephas!—To the Gemoniæ!—Cephas to the Cross!"





CHAPTER V.

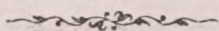
THE ACCUSATION BEFORE NERO.

LATE one morning, the master of the Golden House came forth from its portals, after a night spent in carousing amid a shower of roses and clouds of perfumes;* and now, intent upon a change of dissipation, he turned towards the Vatican palace, whence, after a short rest, he was wont to go to consume the remainder of the day in the circus. But as the imperial retinue was turning from the Sacred Street into the Forum, beyond the lower Janus, Nero found himself in the midst of a crowd of people, mostly Jews, prominent among whom was Simon, who at once addressed his imperial patron:

“Most excellent Cæsar, I demand justice in a capital case.”

The time was past when Nero could be found, like his predecessor, under the open sky, for hours

* SÜET. *Nero*, 31.



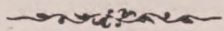
at a time, dispensing justice from his curule chair near the Fabian arch, and exciting the admiration of his subjects by the wisdom of his decisions.* But now at the solicitation of Tigellinus, Elius and the rest of his train of freedmen, with whom Simon had had a perfect understanding, he yielded to the whim of sitting in the tribunal to give a hearing to the friend who so solemnly invoked the imperial justice. Alighting, therefore, from his litter, he mounted the steps of the Comitium, near the Ruminal fig-tree,† traversed with majestic deliberation the lateral portico of the Julian Basilica and took his seat before the main entrance, opposite to the temple of Ops under the Capitoline hill.‡

It is needless to say that the emperor was soon surrounded by a numerous crowd. It was the busiest hour in the Forum, and all was full of civil cases, of lawsuits, contracts, compacts, accounts and

* *IBID.* 15; *Jul.* 43; *Octav.* 32; *Tiber.* 33; *Claud.* 15.

† This famous fig-tree, under which Romulus and Remus were fabled to have played in early infancy, still subsisted in the time of Nero; cf. *TACIT. Ann.*, XIII, 58. Its position was near the present site of the Church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, in the Campo Vaccino.

‡ The position of this Basilica which had take the place of the old Comitium, though preserving its steps and something of its form, corresponded very nearly with that of the present Santa Maria Liberatrice; the side colonade looking toward the Forum, would now face S. Lorenzo in Miranda.



settlements; the porticoes of the Basilicas, the meetings of the municipal officers, the assemblies of bankers, made it like a roaring whirlpool; the throng was still more increased by the great number of wealthy idlers, whose wont it was to spend their mornings about the precincts of the Forum.

But hardly had Nero set foot upon the ground when the crowd began to press so closely around him that his Pretorians found great difficulty in opening a way for their master, The witnesses left the lawyers and the tribunal of the judge; the curious searchers for news who read the *Acta Diurna*, as they slowly ascended the Capitoline hill, rolled up the parchment and hurried back down the sloping street; the narrators enjoying the shade of the arch of Tiberius, the scribes of the school of Xante, the custodians of the temples and of the hundred shrines of the neighborhood, all ran headlong to swell the crowd. Even from the Vicus Jugarius, the mercers slipping their togas over their brown tunics, ran toward the Basilica; the little street urchins, too, who were engaged in their favorite games around the Rostra, threw down the nuts with which they were playing, rushed into the doorways in the attempt to secure a good standing-place; and the women who were drawing water at the Servilian fountain, left their amphora and bucket there, and

letting down the corners of their gowns which were pinned up for work, they too rushed into the hurrying crowd.*

But before the throng could rush into the temple, the guardians of the sacred edifice had given one another the word in a moment, and were able, at every entrance, to resist the press of the multitude. The porters ran to secure the railings of the pretorium, the soldiers on guard drew aside the curtains which surrounded the dais, stretched the carpet upon the steps of the tribunal, on which they placed the curule chair, the small and light tables with writing materials; others quickly brushed away every trace of dust from the seats and ran to summon the scribe. The imperial guard meanwhile entered with their measured tread, occupied the central space, surrounded the tribunal with a hedge of lances and pikes, and planted their bright purple

* The *Vicus Jugarius* corresponded to what is now the *Via della Consolazione*; the Servilian fountain was on the left of the street that led to the Forum; next came the temple of Ops, opposite to which, on the left, was the main entrance of the Julian Basilica. After passing the Basilica we enter the Forum through the arch of Tiberius, and find ourselves before the Rostra, at the foot of the Capitol. The door for egress on the left was called the Capitoline, outside of which passage, on the right, were the officers of the notaries, known as the school of Xante, not far from the spot where we now see the portico of the Dei Consenti, a work far more ancient than the time of Nero.

ensigns at the gates of the enclosure. Nero, in the midst of his body-guard, crossed the threshold; advancing between the double files of the pretorian guard, he entered the enclosure with great solemnity, and took his seat in the tribunal. His chief officers and immediate attendants took their stand at either extremity of the hemicycle, though not too promiscuously to leave to Tigellinus and Elius a prominent place by the side of their master.*

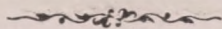
Then, at length, the doors were opened, and in a moment every avenue was thronged, the stairs could not hold the multitude that pressed on toward the upper galleries. Men, women and children trampled upon one another: here might be seen a plebeian *lacerna* between the laticlave of some

* The tribunal was placed higher than the benches (*subsellia*) of the semicircle, the extremities of which were called the *cornua* (the wings). Such tribunals were usually placed in the apsis of the Basilica, and near by were the recesses to which the judge and his counsellors withdrew to deliberate in private, whence the title of *secreta* frequently applied to them. Sometimes the Judge's chair was surrounded by a kind of small temple, surrounded by curtains which were closed when the deliberation took place; for this reason it is called *ædes* by Vitruvius. It may be well to quote the passage (*De architect* V., ch. I, No. 14,) in order to give some idea of the size of a prætorium: "Tribunal quod est in ea æde hemicycli schematis minoris curvaturæ formatum. Ejus autem hemicycli in fronte est intervallum pedum quadraginta sex, introrsus curvaturæ pedum quindecim."



pompous senator and the augusticlave of a wealthy knight; the long-sleeved tunic of the noble matron was mingling its folds with those of the ragged dress of some poor plebeian wife; veils were ruffled and torn into shreds, such was the eagerness to secure a place in the temple, and to enjoy the sight presented below; while new-comers crowded in on all sides in such numbers that not only the interior of the Basilica was thronged, but even the porch and the avenues that led to it overflowed with people.

Amongst those who stood nearest to the tribunal, there was one man wrapped in a Grecian cloak and surrounded by a numerous band of followers, who had pressed close upon the imperial escort and had taken their stand immediately around the railing of the enclosure. These men were there in the hope of witnessing some new spectacle, for the real bloody trials over which Nero was wont to preside, were usually held with closed doors in the interior of the Palatine. They only whispered to one another: "That is Cæsar's friend!"—"The Jewish magician!"—"Simon, Simon!"—"Icarus, Icarus!" These various remarks were silenced by the herald, who with two blasts of his trumpet summoned Icarus to prefer his charge. The gates of the inclosure were thrown open and Simon, with great



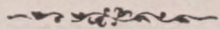
pomp, advanced to the centre of the prætorium, followed by his endorsers and witnesses. Having saluted Augustus and his council, he was preparing to open his harangue. But Cæsar, who was not inclined to prolong the sitting, sent him instructions by a private messenger who whispered into his ear: "Be quick!"

The message had not fallen upon deaf ears. Simon condensed into a few words his accusation against Peter and the Christians. He stated "that, as a Jewish philosopher, he felt a pleasing hope in being thus allowed to bring his complaint before the most excellent Cæsar, who had always favored the Jewish cause, and protected its innocence against the faction of Christ, a faction ever disturbing the public peace. In this Nero Augustus showed himself worthy of his deified predecessors, the divine Julius, Octavius and Claudius, most clement protectors of that nation. The Jews indeed, preserved their own mysteries, though without any detriment to the divinities of mighty Rome; they did not bring in any new religion condemned by the imperial edicts,* but remained within the

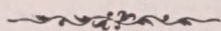
* Besides the persecution raised on the ground of the burning of Rome, Nero made a law of extermination against the Christians. Among others, Sulpicius Severus affirms this in his *Hist. Sacr.* II, 41. We may refer the reader, too, to DE ROSSI, *Bollett. Archeol. crist. ann.* III, p. 93 et seqq.

provisions of the law. Not so the Christians, those incorrigible sowers of scandal. They had already provoked the wrath of the deified Tiberius, raised tumults under the divine Claudius, and had lately perpetrated the most execrable of outrages, by setting fire to the home of the whole world; each hour the heaps of ruins where had once been so many flourishing quarters, which, but for the generous piety of the divine Nero, would have remained in ashes, cried out against the sacrilegious attempt. Ordinary punishments would not avail to check their boldness; Paul, a Roman citizen, had blown up a flame of rebellion in the Synagogues of the Jews in Rome, pretending that a man executed by Pontius, Governor of Judea, had risen from death to life, and was entitled on that account to the homage given to Jupiter Best and Greatest, and to every other divinity. That this Paul had once already been sent to Rome, in chains, and saved from death only by the mercy of Augustus, and was now repaying that favor by using every endeavor to turn away the Romans from their belief in the divinity of Poppea.* But Paul," he

* Nero after killing his wife Poppea, by brutal treatment, thought to make her a goddess, and among the false charges upon which Trasea Peto was put to death, one was, "*Poppeam divam non credere.*" TAC. *Ann.* XVI, 22.



continued, "cared little for their prisons; it was their duty to remove a man whom sacrilege and the Julian law of treason concurred in condemning to death. And now a certain Cephas, a ragged fellow from Galilee, under the assumed name of Peter, not terrified by the punishment of Paul, was fanning the flame of discord lighted by him, and trampling upon every law, human and divine. They held in the deepest contempt the deified Poppea now seated between Juno and Minerva, they openly despised all the divinities, setting up, in their stead, a criminal punished by the Roman law, to whom no thanks were due that Capitoline Jove was not hurled from his pedestal. Peter," continued the indefatigable accuser, "uses all the most wicked arts to carry out his unlawful work; in his hands are always charms and poisons; nay, he is perhaps even now preparing, in his secret assemblies, the torches for a second conflagration. Though absent now, still he is convicted on his own confession; for instead of showing himself, like an honest citizen, in the open light of day, he moves about in the dark, leads a roving life, like a beast of the forest, without roof or fixed abode; appearing only when most unlooked-for, like a spirit of evil, in the sacred assemblies of the Jews, and then only to spread fire and flame and



fury, and disappearing as suddenly as he had come. On these grounds," he said in conclusion, "I claim the protection of our sacred laws and the justice of the most clement Augustus."

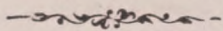
Nero rose from his chair and assuming a grave tone said to those who stood about him: "Paul is already in prison, is he not, Tigellinus?"

Tigellinus nodded affirmation.

"Peter," continued the emperor, "is still at large; see that you find him."

"At any rate," suggested Tigellinus, "we can make note of the names of the guilty and set about securing Cephas: I shall make it my duty to entrap him; and then we can fix a certain day for his trial."

The suggestion was favorably received by Nero, who ordered the herald to proclaim that the charge should be drawn up and signed. Simon had taken care to prepare it beforehand and his tablet was read: "I, Simon Icarus, assert that Paul a Roman citizen of Tarsus, and Cephas, otherwise called Peter, a Galilean, have spoken and acted in an impious manner towards the gods, against the divinity of the deified Poppea, against the majesty of Cæsar, against the lives and safety of the citizens; they have preached new and forbidden super-



stitutions;* and now I claim the exercise of the law against Peter and Paul."

Simon's charge was supported by his followers, a certain Menander, his fellow-countryman from Samaria, by Annubio, a philosopher, by Cleobius, a fanatical disciple, and many others;† and they had their testimony recorded by a notary. Then Augustus ordered the curtains, which surrounded the tribunal to be closed, wrote an order and gave it to the herald. When the veil was again drawn aside a deep silence reigned throughout the vast Basilica while the herald read the following decree: "It seems good to Cæsar that order be taken by Tigellinus, Prefect of the Prætorium, to investigate this matter, to summon the accused, to obtain testimony and proceed according to law. You are dismissed."

Thus closed the first act of the trial, and as the people were gradually dispersing, here and there might be heard such expressions as: "So, he is

* That Peter and Paul were condemned to death on the charge of introducing a new religion, is clearly stated by the author of the "Deaths of the Persecutors," ch. 2. And this was generally the charge brought against the Christians, *genus hominum superstitionis novæ et maleficæ*: so speaks Suet. *Ner*: 16; and Tac. *passim*.

† These names and facts may be found in St. IRENÆUS, *contr. hæres.* I, 23; and in the works ascribed to St. Clement, *passim*.

taking a fancy to play the Judge!" "Pretty justice, indeed, to arraign as a criminal an absent man on the mere word of a Greek impostor!" "It might pass in the case of the Jew; but for the other one who is a Roman citizen, why not give him a hearing, why keep him locked up in prison?" Once more a loud murmur of voices arose in the Basilica. The greater part of those present troubled themselves about neither plaintiff nor defendant, but tried to secure a place on the way of the emperor. Meanwhile Nero had drawn his obese body from the prætor's chair, and after stretching a little his long and misshapen limbs, began to descend the steps of the tribunal. Here he met Simon, whom he accosted familiarly with the question: "I met your wishes, did I not?"

"Jove himself could not have judged better," replied Simon. "You need nothing now but the thunderbolts with which to strike down the impious."

"Vulcan is already forging them. But remember that the bird of Jove is still wanting. Do you forget your promises?"

"Not I," exclaimed the impostor, "I promise and I fulfil."

"But when?"

"On the first day of the Neronian Games."

“Pshaw!” broke in Tigellinus, “it is a long time yet to the Neronian Games; and you know that meanwhile Augustus intends to visit Achaia——”

“No, no,” interrupted Nero, “it is not so long; for I have determined to anticipate the usual time for them, and to have them celebrated before I leave Rome.* Let it remain so. Let it be the first day of the Neronian festival.”

This conversation was finished as they reached the portico in front of the Basilica, and the imperial cortège was about to descend the steps towards the Forum, just before the Rostra, when Simon standing upon the highest step and raising his voice so that the surrounding crowd might hear his words, exclaimed while he pointed with his outstretched forefinger: “Behold, Augustus, the crowned brow of Capitoline Jove; behold the divinity who sees and hears us! There, at his feet, will I sacrifice a bull, on the first day of the Neronian Games, at the third hour, and after taking counsel with my Minerva, I shall wing my flight toward heaven, hover in the airy space over this Forum of Rome, and rising above the Basilicas will salute your

*The Neronian Games, instituted by Nero, were in fact celebrated, as is remarked by Suet. *Nero*, 21, before his departure for Achaia. This journey took place about the month of October, in the year 66 of the Christian era.

Colossus, which rears its head aloft, worthy rival of the Capitoline Jupiter; I shall bid farewell to the Lares of your Golden House, and, scaling the clouds, finally reach my resting-place in heaven.”*

* The colossal statue of Jupiter looked down upon the Forum; that of Nero stood below at the opposite extremity of the Forum, behind several public buildings and basilicas. The foundation of its pedestal may still be seen near the Colosseum. The peculiar devotion to the Lares, of which Simon made profession, is remarked by the author of the *Philosophumena*, and by St. Irenæus.





CHAPTER VI.

TREPIDATION.

THE Apostle of the Gentiles, the leader and master of the Word, the great Paul, was in chains ; now no more should the trumpet tones of that mighty voice, which aroused the multitudes and daily brought new believers into the fold, ring out in those assemblies of the neophytes, in the synagogues of the Jews, in private dwellings and in public squares.

Peter, though deprived of his holy brother Apostle, was not less constant in his divine mission. In the very beginning of these troubles, after taking measures to appease God by prayers and fasting, he resolved to leave his quiet abode on the Viminal, whence he made his daily round to the several churches, and to transfer his headquarters into the very midst of the scene of action. But Simon Magus spoke truly when he complained to Nero,



that his implacable rival never remained in one place. For Peter spent one night on the Vatican, the next across the Tiber, and another in some other quarter of the city; wherever there was to be found a little band of Christians he was there. He appeared, now, in the open light of the day, again amid the darkness of the night, in the private dwellings and in the Basilicas of the Sacred Street and the Forum, amid the most thickly peopled quarters, and in the most deserted, and even at times in the very palace of the emperor, to comfort and strengthen the faithful of Cæsar's household; and no one could tell where Peter was to be found at any particular moment.

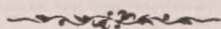
Touching beyond all description was the scene which preceded his departure from the hospitable palace of Pudens. One evening, about sunset, as the Apostle was in prayer, rapt, as usual, in high contemplation, suddenly a knock was heard at the door of his retired apartment; it was Claudia Sabina who came to announce that it was the hour at which they might break their fast. She always came herself, for she would not have missed any occasion of proving her devotion to her holy guest; she was always accompanied by Pudens, and frequently by the Christian members of the household, or by others of the brethren who requested it as a

favor. This time, however, she was followed only by her daughters. She brought a part of a small loaf of brown bread in a clean towel; Praxedes carried a bottle of water in a cooler, and a silver goblet; while Pudentiana held a little dish of sweet lupines. This latter dish alone formed the usual meal of the Apostle;* but when the holy penitent saw this comparatively sumptuous repast set before him now, he smiled as he looked at the young girl and said to her: "May Jesus repay you well, my little lupine-girl, and you, too, good sisters." They bent forward to kiss his reverend hand and Claudia spoke:

"Father, it is painful to me to see you refuse all other refreshment, and yet——"

"Oh! no, sister, let it not trouble you: any other diet would be more injurious than profitable to me; we are now in a season of affliction and tears, and the time for bloodshed will soon be here. With this light diet I shall be better prepared to do my duty in the contest."

* "Naught but lupines graced Peter's frugal board," says St. Gregory Nazianzen in his "Praises of Virtue," *Carm.* II, v. 550, *Opp. Ed. Migne*, t. III, p. 720. And here we must remark that this trait of St. Peter is quoted by the illustrious writer as a well-known fact, and as one viewed in the same light as the austere lives of St. Paul, St. John Baptist and other saints.



The mother and daughter both sighed deeply, and Pudentiana covered her face with her hand. Peter perceiving her emotion, kindly said to her: "Why are you grieved? It was foretold by our Lord; it will be for my good and for that of the whole church. Would you have me turn away from him who is to bind me? too much already have I avoided the enemy,—now it is time to imitate my Divine Master."

"True," answered the holy virgin, "but our Divine Master did not fix the time, and you are now hastening it."

"Not I," replied the Apostle, "but Christ hastens it. He has allowed that our Brother Paul, that great pillar of the church, should be broken,——" and here the voice of the Apostle grew tremulous while a great tear rolled down his already furrowed cheek. "I can no longer hide it; I feel that I must go forth from this retreat and hasten to the rescue of Israel."

"Why, do you not do that every day?" asked Claudia. "Do you not go out every day to preach? If anything is wanting in our hospitality, you have only to speak, and you shall be instantly obeyed. You know well that you are the only master in the house. Pudens would be inconsolable should you leave us to make your home elsewhere."

“No,” replied Peter, “I do not leave your family ; I bear it always in my heart, and in time I shall return to this little apartment. But now all Rome must be my dwelling.”

At this point of the conversation Pudens came in, and learning the subject of the discussion, made every effort to dissuade the Apostle from his purpose, but without avail. He represented to him that he had, on that very day, learned from Demetrius, that Simon Magus was concocting new plans against the Apostle, and intended to accuse him before Nero.

“Another reason,” said the saint, “for removing from here as soon as possible ; I would not for the world be seized in the house of a man of your rank ; you know how bitter Nero is against the Senators.”

“I know, I know,” answered Pudens, “he puts them to death one after another ; but should you, on that account leave my house, you would be doing a great wrong to a devoted son ;” these last words the Senator pronounced with a look of earnest pleading and with his hand pressed upon his heart. “You know well,” he continued, “that I do not prize my own life more.”

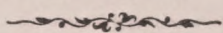
“You are not alone,” said the Apostle, alluding to the danger of the whole family ; at which Claudia

and her daughters, threw themselves at the feet of the Saint, while Claudia exclaimed:

“Ah! holy Father, let not our danger, if indeed danger it be, remove you from our roof. Would that we were worthy to suffer for Jesus Christ as our brethren have done!”

Praxedes joined her entreaties to those of her mother, while Pudentiana, the youngest, too timid to speak, remained on her knees, her hands clasped in earnest petition, and seconding far more forcibly than words the mute eloquence of her tearful eyes.

“Come,” said Peter at length, “do not give way to excessive grief. I know well that you would all consider it as a great gain to suffer for the Lord Jesus; but it is a part of my duty to spare my children every unnecessary occasion of trouble. If I am seized in public or in the house of some poor man, no one will be endangered; but if taken here, great evils might result to the Roman Church. Let us, then, be as wise as serpents. And then, you understand, this is not my only reason. At all events, be consoled; I shall often visit you, especially at the hour of meeting here for the holy sacrifice.” This promise seemed to revive them a little. “Meanwhile,” continued Peter, “I leave to you the care of watching over Paul and comforting him a little in his chains.”



"Oh, Father!" cried Pudentiana, unable longer to contain her emotion, "we have prayed so earnestly, we have sent so many messengers, we have tried every means—and that prison cannot be opened!"

"Yes," added Claudia, "we have tried a hundred ways of sending him some relief; the guards are inexorable, Tigellinus has had him consigned to the centurion of the guard, as guilty of high treason, with orders to keep him in the closest confinement. Oh! if poor Thecla knew this!"

"Well! write to her," said Peter, in a decided tone, "write to her in my name, and tell her to come to Rome when she can make it convenient. She shall not be without her consolation."

The girls were a little cheered by this gleam of hope. Peter, after making the sign of the cross over the table, began to peel the lupines, meanwhile continuing to speak words of kindly comfort to his hosts. But this was to be the last time. That night, when darkness had settled upon the city of Rome, he rose from prayer, called around him the devoted household of the Senator; amid their tears and sobs, he gave them a special blessing, and a moment after was on his way to the Vatican Vale.



"Where is Peter?" asked the faithful on the next day.

"No one knows," was the reply.

"The only thing that we do know," said a second, "is that last night he officiated in the Church on the Aventine."

"And the other day," added a third, "he held an assembly and baptized in the Ostrian cemetery.

"He was seen in the sand-pits of Lucina, on the Aurelian road," continued another, "catechizing the neophytes. We heard, then, that he was to spend that day on the Viminal, at the house of Pudens."

"No, that cannot be; this morning at dawn he was already moving through the streets on the Vatican, and among the alleys of the lime burners."

"And I saw him at twelve o'clock, walking openly along the streets on the other side of the Tiber."

"And no one laid a finger upon him?"

"No, indeed! He goes where he will, no door seems to be closed to him. They say that even the Jews go in such numbers that they have to form a line at his door; they bring him their sick, their blind, their deaf and their cripples. He has only to bless them and cures seem to rain down upon them all. Those who cannot manage to get themselves before him, try to touch the hem of his cloak, and

they draw wonderful virtue from it. Why, his very shadow cures the sick, as it passes over them."

"Not only the sick! He has even raised a dead man."

"Ah! what did Simon Magus say to that?"

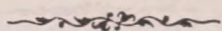
"He is worrying and pining away; and the worst of it is that the dead man was a youth, I don't remember the name—but a distant relation of Cæsar's."

"So it is not without reason that Rome is full of Peter's miracles;* they are the common talk; this is something different from Simon Icarus!"

"And yet many are gnashing their teeth rather angrily at it all."

"Yes, the emperor and the devil and those who believe in them. As for me, I am for Peter! Let who will be wroth—may Christ triumph!"

* The continual miracles of St. Peter, are attested by the Acts of the Apostles, II, 43; III, 7; V, 12-15; &c. To those especially which were performed in Rome, beside the presumption afforded by the Acts, we may find allusion in LACTANTIUS, (or whoever else the author may be). *De mort. persec.* ch. 2; in the author of the work *De Excid. Hieros.* II, 2; among the works of ST. AMBROSE, Ed. Migne, t. I, p. 2068. OROSIUS (*Histor.* VII, 6) says expressly.—"Petrus. . . Romam venit et salutarem cunctis credentibus fidem fideli verbo docuit, potentissimisque virtutibus approbavit." The account of the raising of this dead man is taken from the Clementine books and from other old annals.



Thus were the faithful encouraged and rejoiced by the glories of the Apostle. But when they heard of the capital charge brought him by Simon Magus in the Julian Basilica, and knew that the report was spreading that Tigellinus had been directed to lay violent hands upon the Saint; then the tender filial affection of the neophytes toward their beloved Father, at once changed all their sentiments. He could no longer appear in any Christian family, much less in the Churches in his regular visitations, without finding himself beset with a hundred affectionate petitions to withdraw himself from the threatening danger. They urged that "Paul was already in chains; what would become of the flock if its chief pastor were also taken away? What good could come of his throwing himself into the grasp of cruel, faithless, brutal and insolent enemies? He would have to endure a few months only of retirement; meanwhile Simon Magus would, of himself, fall into disrepute. Cæsar, in his natural fickleness, what with the troubles and disorders in Greece, would perhaps change his mind and his views; then Peter might resume the field, and preach without opposition." The holy Apostle received these affectionate demonstrations of his children with paternal tenderness, and generally answered by a smile which seemed to say: "The

time is past when Peter could tremble before the enemies of Jesus Christ."

Meanwhile the season had come which was considered most favorable for the journey to Achaia; Nero had appointed a day for the Neronian Games, at which time Simon Icarus was to fulfil his famous promise of flying up to heaven. It was well known that if the magician could manage in any way to satisfy Nero's curiosity to witness a feat so wonderful, he would from that time forth find the way clear for his every wish and that nothing could then save Peter from his ravenous claws. His Jewish partisans, now discouraged by the renown of Peter, would take courage and would not rest until they had given up the Apostle, alive or dead, into their master's hands. That malicious and implacable witch, Helen, already seemed to have a hundred hounds in leash, ready to let loose against the hated foe of her worthy consort.

Such were the fears of the Christians. There was accordingly a redoubling of prayers to God and pressing solicitations to the beloved Apostle that he would withdraw from Rome before the destructive storm. But Peter could not bring himself to yield one inch of the ground in a battle fought for the name and the glory of Jesus Christ. So he was inexorable, would not discuss the matter,

and nerved his soul to constancy. Heavenly bright, to his eyes, was the promised palm of martyrdom.*

The few days which immediately preceded the Neronian games were marked by an almost nervous excitement in Rome. The whole city resounded with the note of preparation; the schools of music re-echoed with the rehearsals of harpers and musicians; everywhere numerous instruments were being tuned into harmony for the theatres; singers were training their throats to bird-like trills, to almost reckless fugues, and aiming perseveringly at unapproachable flights; chariots were being decorated for the race-course, and the steeds prepared for the display; in the training-school and gymnasium was heard the sound of all athletic sports mingled with the whistling of the charioteer's whiplash; the libraries were filled with orators and poets sweating over their labored eulogies of Augustus, while all the citizens longed for the immoral entertainments of day and night which they knew would characterize the Neronian orgies. Many even were looking up Grecian palliums and slippers, or military cloaks and hoods, in order that their holiday dress might be in keeping with the

* JOHN XXI, 18; ST. AMBR. *Sermo contr. Auxentium*, n. 13, Ed. Migne, t. II, p. 1010.

Grecian license brought into Rome.* The people poured in crowds to the theatres to see the stupendous masses of rock and fortress scenery; but the chief subject of all conversations and of anxious curiosity was the expected flight of the new Icarus, who was looked upon by all with feelings somewhat akin to awe.

Pudens, laying aside, for the occasion, something of his senatorial dignity—a policy then necessary to preserve life—learned most of the current rumors, partly by adroitly mingling in the crowds of common people or of the hangers-on about the taverns, and partly by reports from trusty scouts both heathen and Christian, whom he had distributed about the baths and the market-places. Demetrius, the Cynic, was his master-workman; he came often to report, for he knew how to enjoy a senatorial supper, a thing not wholly contemptible even to a philosopher of the straitest sect.

“Well!” said Pudens to the philosopher, as the

*Suet. *Nero*, 12; *Domit.* 4, Tacit. *Ann.* XIV, 20-21. Even then, honorable pagans were disgusted at the excesses of the Neronian Quinquennalia. But what could they do? “*Pluribus ipsa licentia placebat, ac tamen honesta nomina prætendebant;*” and amongst other names, the education of the people. We see such lights, even at the present day, at the exposition at Paris, and hear similar apologies for them. “*Nihil sub sole novum!*”

latter entered the *atrium* of the palace: "How goes the market?"

"All in comedies and street-corner gossip," was the reply.

"But new comedies, eh?"

"No, indeed; all old; old as the beard of Father Tiber."

"Ha! I remember that your tongue does not easily get into play until your throat has been a little moistened; Maurius!"—to a slave who was just entering from a pantry at the side of the hall* "bring a seat here opposite to me for our Diogenes. Well now"—turning to Demetrius and taking him by the ear—"where do you come from?"

"From a hundred places; from the Campus Martius, from the Portico of Octavia, from Pompey's Theatre, from the Thermæ of Agrippa, from the Circus Maximus, from the Forum, from the street-corners across the Tiber, from the Septi Julii . . ."

"Enough! enough!"—interrupted the Senator—"it is a particular providence that you do not come too from Armenia and India at one bound. But come! What good morsel do you bring me?"

"The morsel and the flavor I expect from you. Is it not your dinner-hour?"

*The dining rooms and pantries generally opened in the atrium or hall.

Yes, but not the hour for dining *gratis*," replied the Senator; "here you make your dinner on dry bread unless you bring the news of the day."

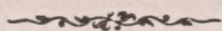
'That is a good one! Do you not see with your own eyes what preparations are made for the Quinquennalia? Have you not heard the lowing of oxen at the Septi Julii? Have you not heard the Pindars and Homers putting themselves out of joint to sugar their Jove of the Sewers? Are you not sufficiently stunned by this tumult of men and women, beasts and demigods, all crowding and pushing forward to the lists? You gentlemen of the purple robe, stretched at ease in your litters, never touch the ground; you do not know what we poor mortals are doing here below; but I do, for I nearly broke my shin against one of those infernal benches in the Forum—may Jove send a thunderbolt through him that put them there!"

"Pshaw! pshaw! What a noise about a stumble! But you have no doubt been enjoying the splendid sight presented by the Golden House——"

"May it sink into the pit!"

"Roma domus fiet: Veios migrate, Quirites;
Si non et Veios occupat ista domus."*

* "All Rome is made one house; you may go to Veii, Quirites, unless indeed this house embraces even Veii." This was a pasquinade of the times, in allusion to the boundless



“Away with your street-jokes! You had better take counsel of the bird that flies to-morrow. What do they say of the magician at the palace?”

“Nothing that I know, except he will either fly to-morrow or break his neck in the attempt. It is the common opinion.”

“But do you believe it? Are you too, perhaps, another one of those silly birds?”

“Yes, by the gods!” replied Demetrius, puffing vigorously; “I believe it over and over again, and I would that Simon Icarus could carry off on his shoulders his great master, too!”

“And whither, pray?”

“To heaven; to the highest peak of Olympus; to the bosom of Jove; if they would only take their start from the Tarpeian Rock or the Gemonise, poor little innocents!”

“No danger!” said Pudens. “He will not be likely to risk hurting even his little finger. To-morrow morning everybody will be looking for Simon;—he is not about—where is he?—Nobody knows?—Which way did he go?—Hum!—And you poor fellows there in the Forum with your noses turned up towards heaven, will be brought

extent of the Golden House which took in part of the Palatine, Cœlian and Esquiline hills with the valleys between them. Vid. Suet. *Nero*. 39.

down to earth again by the herald's proclamation: 'Quirites, you may go. The bird has flown during the night; you are fools who believed in him.'"

"Ah! as to that, no! No, certainly! I am willing to bet my head on it. It will be a flight either to heaven or to hell; either Phæton's chariot or Charon's boat. You know of what stuff His Majesty is made. When he has once said: 'Take hold of the moon with your teeth;' it may cost a little straining, perhaps, but there is no getting off."

"But if the bird quietly gives you the slip during the night, will you expect to catch him to-morrow by throwing a little salt upon his tail?"

"Everything is possible except that. There is very little choice left him in the matter. Since the day when Icarus made his famous boast there in the Forum, swearing to fly up to heaven, Nero considers him bound to himself; and now he has only to keep his promise or to take the consequences."

"What! does he keep him chained?"

"Not at all! He keeps him like a god upon the altar; but under lock and key. In fact by means of a fair exterior and fine words he keeps his bird in the cage; he gives him a golden ring to perch in, if you will; golden cups, golden food, all gold, gold, gold; but woe to him if he shows the least

inclination to make his escape! He will wring his neck on the spot, or give his body to the lions in the circus.”*

“And how does Simon take this diet?”

“Oh! quite naturally. He plumes himself, nestles his feathers, flaps his wings, and bows his thanks to my lord, pretending to accept all his incense. Every day he is closeted for hours with his august friend and pupil.”

“Pupil in what?”

“Oh, in everything. He is a grammarian, a rhetorician, geometer, painter, a master in the art of preparing ointments, and in fortune-telling. He is a skilful acrobat, physician, magician, &c., and every day he swears and swears again that he will fly.”†

* Dio Chrysostom, a contemporaneous writer says expressly (Orat. XXI): “No one dared contradict Nero in anything, nor answer to any command of his that it was impossible; so that if he had commanded one to fly, even in that he must be obeyed, and the poor man was kept for a long time at court, near the emperor’s person, (ἐνδοῦ παρ’ αὐτῷ ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις,) just as if he were really expected to fly after that.” This looks like an evident allusion to the case of Simon Magus who was kept in sight until the day of his great attempt.

† “Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes,
 Augur, schoenobates, medicus, magus; omnia novit,
 Graeculus esuriens in coelum, jusseris, ibit.
 Ad summan non Maurus erat, neque Sarmata, nec Thrax,
 Qui sumpsit pennas, mediis sed natus Athenis.”

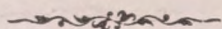
In these lines Juvenal, (Sat. III, 76–90) a contemporary writer,

“Well, we shall see what will come of it,” said Pudens, as he prepared to start for the baths, the usual prelude to the Roman meals.

The Faithful, in general, who had so often witnessed the diabolical feats of Simon, were not wholly without fear lest his experiment should succeed, and thus great damage accrue to the faith. Their trouble of mind was greatly increased when, in the office of Friday, they heard the order published in all their assemblies for fasting and prayer. In the oratory of the mansion of Pudens, the Apostle Peter appeared unexpectedly and in person exhorted all to penance, especially on the Saturday which immediately preceded the opening of the Games.* But while he found his children obedient to this invitation, he met with an opposition equally strong on another point. At the close of the sacred rites, while he was informing Pudens that he would avail himself of his hospitality

seems to describe Simon Magus at the court of Nero, simply omitting his name and changing that of his country. We are the more inclined to adopt this explanation of the lines, because the poet continues for some verses further to brand the disgraceful turpitude of Nero's court. Besides, this poetical episode about Simon Magus corresponds exactly with the historical account.

* An old tradition, quoted by St. Augustin, and already mentioned in the course of this legend.



until after the Quinquennalia, he suddenly saw himself surrounded by the chief members of the Roman Church, all kneeling at his feet and beseeching him to withdraw from the city. The sisters especially pleaded with a tearful earnestness which would have softened a harder heart. The priests, together with the faithful laity, pressed round the Apostle with such expressions of heartfelt sorrow that he felt overcome.

“What, then, do you wish me to do, my dear children,” asked Peter. “Would you have me fly in the presence of death? But how can I thus deny what I have so often told you of the happiness of suffering for Jesus Christ? Such a fate is not a death, but a resurrection. Can I refuse to undergo the torments to which I have nerved so many of the brethren by my exhortations? How can I fly when our Divine Master promised me a share in His passion?” But those children afflicted and trembling for their beloved Father, could not entertain these reasons, and in default of arguments they pressed him with their tears so that the hall resounded with disconsolate sobs and entreaties, while here and there a voice broken by sighs was heard: “Will you, then, holy Father, in order not to withdraw for a few days, abandon us forever? Who will save us from so many snares if you are

taken from us? Father, take pity on us, if you have no care for yourself." A long hour was consumed amid such touching scenes as this. The next day brought a new series of assaults. On the night immediately preceding the Games, Peter felt that he was overcome; overcome not by arguments, but by tears. So, appearing in the nightly meeting he announced that he would yield to the universal prayer of clergy and people. These words were followed by a lively outburst of gladness, of praises to God, and of spiritual exultation. Each one felt as if his tears and prayers had saved his father; that his was the merit before God and the Church. The Apostle cut short their expressions of joy by beginning the celebration of the Holy Mysteries. After giving them the Divine Bread, he prayed awhile, then rising from his knees, he said: "Brethren, I go for the present. May Jesus Christ our Lord preserve you in His holy grace, and may the Holy Spirit abide with you."

"And with thy spirit," replied the faithful with one voice.

"Father, I go with you," cried several at once.

"No, brethren, I must go alone, that the place of my retreat may not be known. Persevere in prayer that God may confound the machinations of His enemies." And he left the chamber. At the outer

door he found Pudens and the women of the household on their knees. Pudentiana had gone in haste to bring the Apostolic Staff and now presented it to Peter. The Apostle gave to her and to all the hospitable family a most affectionate blessing, then setting his staff firmly to the ground, he passed out at a rapid gait.*

* The words ascribed to St. Peter and to the faithful, on this occasion, we take from St. Ambrose, or from the author, whoever he be, of the work *De Excidio Hieros.* II, 2, who concludes thus: "Victus fletibus, Petrus cessit; promisit se urbe egressurum. Proxima nocte salutatis fratribus et celebrata oratione (the εὐχὴ of the Greeks, the sacred liturgy, in other words Holy Mass), proficisci solus cœpit."



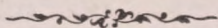


CHAPTER VII.

A FLIGHT AND A FALL.

AT LAST the long-desired day had dawned which was to usher in the Neronian Games, and both the Roman people and their master remembered the promise of Simon Icarus. Though the great feat was announced to take place at noon, yet as early as nine o'clock the Forum was already excessively crowded. Cæsar had risen from his downy couch, and was now walking up and down under the portico of the imperial palace, without a toga, with a handkerchief loosely tied about his neck, ungirded and barefooted.* He was engaged in a familiar conversation with Simon, which he interrupted from time to time, to look out from the balconies on the Sacred Street and the Forum, and watch the constantly increasing crowds. In one of

* Adeo pudendus, ut plerumque synthesinam indutus, ligato circa collum sudario prodierit in publicum, sine cinctu et liscalceatus. Suet. *Nero*, ch. 51.



these pauses, he turned to his companion and said, as he pointed toward the Capitol: "Take care; it is pretty high, you see."

"I have measured it," answered Simon, "I shall make my leap even higher. Does your Majesty see that cloud which is floating high in the air, over your Colossus there? That cloud awaits me. But remember, Cæsar, whilst you still remain on earth, to punish my traducers, we shall meet again, when you least expect it. The heavens and the earth are my habitation."

So spoke the magician, expressing outwardly the most unlimited confidence while his heart was full of rage at the ill-dissembled mistrust of Nero. No less painful was the wound inflicted on his proud heart, by the daily-increasing renown in which he was leaving Peter. A hundred times he seriously deliberated with himself whether he should, before taking his flight from the Capitol, demand the Apostle's blood from the Emperor: a hundred times he resolved to do it, and as often he checked the words upon his very lips. He was ashamed to show so much fear of a man of the people.* "And besides," he reasoned with himself, "Peter is hidden, perhaps he is far from Rome; let us get safely

* "Torquebatur magus Apostoli gloria." Excid. Hieros. II, 2.

through the business of to-day, and then to crush *him* will be but child's play."

Meanwhile the day had been advancing steadily in its course. The Forum was one mass of human beings; and the crowd was momentarily growing larger. Besides the Sacred Street which was like a stream of humanity, the New Street, the Turarian, Jugarian, Tuscan and Mamertine lanes, as well as every other avenue of approach, poured in a real torrent. The galleries of the Basilicas and the terraces of the Capitoline temples were covered with people; even the towers, the roofs and the very eaves of the houses as far down as the Forums of Cæsar and of Augustus, were crowded with spectators who called loudly for Icarus. Simon, therefore, appeared with the Emperor, on one of the balconies which connected the Palatine with the Capitol, and ran along one side of the Julian Basilica; from this point, in the sight of an immense multitude, with many pompous gestures and expressions he made a speech of farewell. His most devoted companions and disciples were waiting for him at the foot of the great staircase, where they received him with repeated bursts of applause which were reëchoed by the crowd in the Forum. For a moment, now, his presumption received a slight check when his eye rested upon

the Tarpeian Rock immediately before him; but shaking off the sudden chill which had seized upon his heart, he confirmed his impious rashness and renewed his self-immolation to the demon, by repeating the dark oaths that held him to his contract.

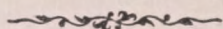
He was now slowly ascending the slope of the Capitoline hill, along the Sacred Street.* He was dressed in an ample philosopher's cloak, as white as snow: he was crowned with laurel and surrounded by a numerous train of disciples and sacrificers. His step was haughty; he paused from time to time before the crowd drawn up in dense masses on his way, to afford to all a fair opportunity of beholding him. He raised his brow as proudly as if its gloomy clouds had been a crown of majesty, and on recognizing amid the throng some Jews of his party, he paused to address them: "I go to the Father: be true to me and I will prepare you a seat at the

* "Conscendit statuto die montem Capitolinum." *Excid. Hieros. ubi. sup.* We find mention of the gallery which connected the Julian Palace with the Capitol, in *SUET. Calig.* ch. 22. It seems to have passed over the lateral nave of the Julian Basilica, and to have been the very place from which Caligula threw down money among the people, as may be seen in the same author, ch. 37. To complete the passage a bridge was also built, but was soon after destroyed; in the time of Nero it was necessary to pass up the steps inside of the Basilica, to enter the Forum, and then to go up by the ordinary route.

foot of my throne, whence I shall henceforth pour down on my elect, both in heaven and on earth, my divine riches." Or again at times, he spoke in more threatening tones: "Woe! Woe! to the perverse Galileans! I leave them my malediction!" To his most fanatical followers, he swore: "Indeed I say to you that he who believes in me, shall not see old age nor taste of death; in me is the source of eternal life." To all he said with an air and tone of consummate self-conceit: "Remember that you have seen the word of God," and here he placed his hand upon his breast; "I am the Beautiful, the Paraclete, the Omnipotent, the Living Bread, the All of God."

At these words the multitude, always ready to follow blindly every plausible impostor, threw themselves at his feet, and kissed the hem of his garment.* Thus blaspheming his Creator and Saviour, renouncing both Judaism and Paganism, an apostate and heresiarch, emulating Lucifer, the lost wretch went forth. He entered the Capitol by

* The singular promises and blasphemous threats of Simon, as well as the bestowal of a laurel crown and the popular applause may be found mentioned in the *Constit. Apost.* VI, 9; *Hist. Excid. Hieros. ubi sup.*; ST. JUSTIN, I *Apol. Christ.* ch 26; ST. JEROME, *In Matt.* XXIV, 5; ST. MAXIMUS of Turin, *Homil.* LXXII, Ed. Migne; ISIDOR, *Hispal. Chronica*, Ed. Migne, t. III.

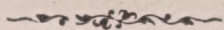


the Saturnian gate, passed the arches of Scipio and of Nero, and at length appeared on the porch of the temple of Capitoline Jove. Here, amid the reverent silence of the throngs of people who were looking upon him from all sides, he sacrificed a white bull to Jupiter.* Then, having dismissed all those who had attended him, except a few who were initiated in his diabolical rites, he withdrew into the grove of the Asylum and began his impious incantations.†

The sun was now high in the heavens and shone brightly near the zenith. But suddenly a dark cloud was seen to rise from the summit of the hill, giving forth quick and repeated flashes of baleful light. In the midst of this unnatural cloud a flaming chariot drawn by winged and fiery steeds was seen advancing towards the edge of the Tarpeian Rock. In the chariot Simon stood with an air of proud triumph, his brow surrounded by a

* That such a sacrifice was offered by Simon, appears from the *Epitome of the Acts of St. Peter*, ch. 54, and in the works of St Clement, Ed. Migne, t. II.

† “Collegit sese, atque omnem excitans suorum carminum potentiam,” etc. *Excid. Hieros. ubi sup.* The grove of the Asylum consisted of but a few trees, and occupied the space now known as the Capitol square; the ascent to the Capitoline Jove must have nearly coincided with that which leads up from that square to the Ara-cœli; at the foot of the ascent rose the arch of Nero.



luminous halo; his left hand held the reins while with his right he pointed up to heaven. From under his arms sprang two great wings, glittering with the brilliancy of many jewels and with all the colors of the rainbow. In the Forum every tongue was mute with a feeling of sacred awe, and few were even sufficiently free from the solemn spell to raise a finger in order to point out to their neighbors the wonderful sight. Nero himself stood on the most prominent balcony of the Palatine, shading his eyes with one hand and with the other pointing in the direction of the new divinity, upon whom he was gazing with unmoving eyes. Icarus directed his course to the highest point of the rock; here he was wrapped in a cloud from which his fiery chariot soon again emerged and rose up toward the highest regions of the air. His steeds seemed to tread the liquid ether at a plunging gallop, and to move at ease as though in a familiar element. Now an immense shout burst forth from the assembled multitude wild with excitement at the sight of such a prodigy; the air trembled with the frantic applause which seemed to shake the very stars. Many prostrated themselves upon the earth, in adoration of the supposed deity, and rising again, applied the extremity of their hands to their lips, then threw them up into the air, which was the

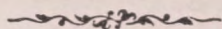


usual mode of expressing the homage of adoration; mothers lifted up their babes on high as if to secure for them the last influence of the departing divinity; the followers of the magician were almost distracted with joy at the apparent triumph of their master.

Amid all this excitement of minds, of voices and gestures, no one had observed a venerable old man, whose countenance bore an expression of severe and terrible majesty, and who was kneeling on a large stone opposite the imperial palace. His hands were clasped around a travelling staff; he looked more like a statue than like a living man, save that now and then his eyes were raised up to heaven and his lips moved in fervent prayer. Meanwhile, Simon was soaring upward, and had just paused, as if balanced in mid-air, over the head of Nero. The old man rose up, stretched forth his hands in prayer—in an instant the scene was changed! The flames which surrounded the wonderful prodigy disappeared, a crash was heard like that of a thunder-bolt, and the thousands of eyes which were gazing intently upward saw the chariot and the chargers suddenly vanish in smoke, while the rider hurled headlong down, struck upon a projecting corner of Nero's portico from which he rolled upon the pavement at the feet of the old man, where he lay mangled and bleeding, and but poorly covered by

the torn and tattered shreds of his proud philosophic mantle.*

* It would be a waste of time to enter upon a discussion of the possibility of Simon's flight, since it is related and asserted in greater or less detail by many ancient writers. It is more to our purpose to state that three contemporary Pagan writers and a fourth, who wrote not long after, seem to allude to it openly. They are SUTTONIUS, *Nero*, 13, who speaks of a certain Icarus who, in an attempt to fly, fell to the earth and sprinkled Nero with his blood; JUVENAL, *Sat.* III, 74, *seq.*, who mentioned some juggler equally ready at rope-walking, augury, magic, in a word: "*in cœlum ibit sumpsit pennas*;" DIO CHRYSOST, *Orat.* 21, who speaks of Nero's atrocious order compelling some unlucky victim to fly; LUCIAN, *Philopseud.* 13-14, with his Hyperboreus to whom he ascribes the very wonders related of Simon Magus by the holy Fathers, including even the sorceries performed by means of the image of a child and the flight which is related by one of the interlocutors in a dialogue. Now for the circumstances of the occurrences which we have introduced. The hour was at high noon. *Const. Apost.* VI, 9; *Isid. Hispal. ubi sup.* The place was the immediate neighborhood of the Capitol and the Tarpeian Rock. *Excid. Hieros. ubi sup.* The grounds for adding the flames, the chariot, the demons bearing it up, the wings of Simon, the sudden fall after the prayer of Peter, and the presence of Nero, may be found in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, *ubi sup.*, and in many other places in the Clementine books. ARNOBIUS, *Contra Gentes*, II, 12, mentions the fact as one of public notoriety, and as beyond denial by the heathens. Among other authorities, too, we will only mention: St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* VI, 15; St. Maximus of Turin, *ubi sup.*; the works of Tertullian, Ed. Migne, t. II, p. 1059; Sulpicius Severus, *St. Sacro* II, 28; St. Epiphanius, *Heresies*, XXI, 5; St. Philastrius, *Heresies*, 29; Theodoret, *Heret. fav.* I, 1; St. Isidore Pelusium, *Epist.* I, 13, Ed. Migne; Dracontius, a poet of the IVth century, *Carm sup. Deum*, III, 217-242, etc., etc.



“He is dead!”—“No; he still moves!”—“Alive?”—“Dead?”—were the exclamations heard from the crowd as they gathered round the bleeding body, and as they passed from mouth to mouth they were accompanied with various expressions of feeling. Some pitied him, others expressed their joy at the result, while some even made his misfortune the subject of jokes and ridicule. The latter sentiment seemed to prevail at last, and the story of Icarus, coupled with that of Apsetus,* was on every tongue. Nero, without further ceremony, without vouchsafing even a look at the helpless divinity, turned coldly away and called for a change of garments, for he had been sprinkled profusely with the blood from Simon’s body when it struck upon the cornice near him. The multitude quickly dispersed by different routes, mortified and disabused; and as the various groups passed along the streets their conversation was carried on in a tone which showed that they were heartily ashamed of their credulity.

Some, however, who had seen the old man kneeling in prayer, his sudden rising and the speedy fall of Icarus at his feet, as soon as they had recovered

* Apsetus was a Lybian who would also have passed for a god. His story is mentioned in conjunction with that of Simon Magus in the *Philosophumena*, VI. ch. I, 18.

a little from their first stupor, began to whisper to one another :

“ But what was that old man doing there, so recollected ? ”

“ Did you see how he suddenly sprang up, like a wild beast ? ”

“ I wonder if he is not some enemy of Icarus ? a sorcerer perhaps ? ”

“ If physiognomy goes for anything, he certainly is. ”

“ Let us return and look into the matter. ”

They hastened back, searched for the old man, examined the spot where they had seen him ; but he had disappeared in the crowd.

“ Here is the stone, ” cried one, “ on which he was kneeling. I was here quite close to him. See, here is the blood of Icarus ! ”

“ Look at this hole ! ” exclaimed another, “ see, here are prints of knees in the rock ! ”

One of the party having fitted his own knees into the cavities, exclaimed : “ Exactly ! Two knees imprinted in the stone ! But, by Hercules ! it is a flag-stone like all the others on the street ; yet all are even except this one ! ”

“ A sorcerer ! down with the magician ! ” they cried.*

* The precise spot on which St. Peter was seen *fixis genibus*,

But Peter (for the old man was none other,) was already far away. He had left the house of Pudens before daybreak, and as he moved at a rapid pace towards the Porta Capena and along the Appian Road he crossed the Almon* at dawn. So absorbed was he in contemplation, that he seemed unconscious of all around him. And yet he was carefully searching for a suitable place in which to take shelter during his temporary self-exile. At

as it is related by St. Maximus of Turin, *ubi sup.*, and with outstretched hands according to the *Recognit.*, as already quoted, was not a theatre, in our sense of the term. The word theatre was used by those writers to signify any place intended for public displays. From St. Epiphanius, *loc. cit.*, we learn that it was in the middle of the city. (ἐν μέσῃ τῇ τῶν ὁ Ρωμαίων πόλει.) We learn, too, from the Roman tradition, that it was precisely the spot now occupied by Santa Maria Nuova, or as it is more commonly known, Santa Francesca Romana, a locality exactly opposite the principal entrance to the Palatine. Now although this space opened on the Sacred Street and not on the Forum, it may easily be believed that Nero from one of these terraces watched the flight of Simon who had started from an elevated part of the Capitol. That this tradition is very ancient is proved by the fact that Pope St. Paul I, built a church on this spot, "in quo loco usque hactenus (before the year 767, as also at the present time,) eorum genus pro testimonio in postremo venturæ generationis in quodam fortissimo silice licet esse noscuntur designata." ANAST. BIBL. *Vitæ Rom. Pont., S. Paulus*. Even before the time of Anastasius, the venerated stone is mentioned by S. GREGORY of Tours, *Mirac.* I, 28; and this saint died in 595.

* This is a small stream emptying into the Tiber and now known as the Acquetaccio.

one moment he felt an inclination to go among the Hernici, at another he turned towards Latium, at times he felt even a great desire to be among the flourishing Christian communities of Campania, or again his heart rested among his children in Naples and Pozzuoli. Suddenly he felt himself overwhelmed with a sense of the Divine Presence, and raising his eyes he saw his Divine Master coming toward him at a quick pace, like a traveller eager to reach the object of his journey. His countenance bore that expression of familiar love which shone from it when He conversed with His own during his earthly career.

“Lord!” exclaimed Peter, whose heart was full of happiness at the sight of Jesus; “whither art thou going?” And he fell prostrate at the feet of the Lord.

And Jesus answered: “I am going to Rome to be crucified again,” and with these words He disappeared. These words shed a ray of heavenly light into the soul of Peter; he knew, then, that his condescension in leaving Rome was not acceptable in heaven. After having prayed long and fervently, and watered with his tears the ground marked by the Saviour’s footsteps, he turned back towards Rome and reëntered the city, more than ever eager

for the promised palm of martyrdom.* He was going back to die; and he went back with a free and steady step, never stopping on the way until he found himself once more in the midst of the Forum. There, with a firm trust in the words of his Master, he awaited the enemy already so often discomfited, to give him a last defeat.

Many and various were the rumors rife in the Roman Church on that Sunday. The fatal fall of Simon Magus was currently attributed to the joint prayers of Peter and Paul; but the difficulty was to conciliate the conflicting reports of individuals. Some asserted positively that they had seen the Apostle on the Appian Road, on his way to Naples; others had met him on the Appian Road hastening toward Rome. A confused and uncertain rumor was spread among the Jews, and flew rapidly from mouth to mouth, that Peter had been in the Sacred Street opposite to Cæsar; the disciples

* This vision is mentioned by the author of the *Excid. Hierosol. ubi sup.*, by St. Ambrose, *Serm. Contr. Auxentium*, ch. 3, *Ed. cit.*; and by the tradition of the Roman Church which, even to our own time, venerates the sacred spot and the Church built there under the title of *Domine quo vadis*, or Santa Maria delle Piante. In fact the footprints of the Saviour have remained impressed in the stone, venerated in the earliest days of the Church, and now preserved, not far off, in the Basilica of St. Sebastian.

of Simon said that they had seen him disappear in the crowd just as they were picking up their fallen master. In fine, one account was that Peter had been seized by order of Nero and cast into the Mamertine prison together with Paul. No one knew anything certainly. Peter did not appear, nor did he send any news about himself. Nero, already forgetful of his *friend* Simon, was hastily preparing to leave for Achaia.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST WORDS OF PETER IN THE MAMERTINE PRISON.

AT THE foot of the Capitoline hill, just where the Forum opens on the Mamertine road, stood a large and very plain edifice built of square blocks of stone and bearing on the façade, the inscription: CAIUS. VIBIUS. SON OF C. RUFINUS, M. COCCEIUS. NERVA. CONSULS. BY A DECREE OF THE SENATE;* and each one who read mentally supplied the words: RESTORED THIS PRISON. No window varied the stern monotony of that long and smooth wall, which seemed to frown with its gloomy brow upon all evil-doers and to warn by its very presence, the Forum and the Comitium. Only a narrow door, surmounted by a small iron grating, relieved

* The wall is still standing and the inscription is legible: C. VIBIUS, C. F. RUFINUS, M. COCCEIUS. NERVA. COSS. EX. SC. Whence we gather that the Tullian or Mamertine Prison was renewed or enlarged in the seventh year of the reign of Augustus.

the darkness of the den walled in behind that grim and forbidding front. Along its left wall ran the steps of the Gemoniæ; a deep vaulted cavern running far into the live rock of the Capitoline hill, whence its walls and ceiling bore the appearance of unusual hardness; in the pavement was an opening which led down to the Robur or Tullian Prison. This was a deeper sepulchre dug down into the bowels of the earth, girded with sharp projecting stones, with no other entrance for air or light than a round aperture in the vault.

In the Tullian Prison had perished Jugurtha and the accomplices of Catiline, and lately, in the days of Tiberius, Sejanus with other criminals. Under Nero, it witnessed the long sufferings of his innocent victims and of the Saints of Jesus Christ. Could one have entered with a torch into this hidden mine, he might have perceived two venerable old men seated upon the pavement leaning against a stone column to which their chains were secured. They were engaged in a calm conversation about their approaching punishment and were magnifying joyously the glory of the Redeemer. Both were grey with years, both thin and wasted; but one was tall in stature, with a square and bony face, and sharply defined features; his beard was short and crisp, and his whole countenance bore the impress

of austere majesty. The other was of less than medium height, slightly bent, with a fair complexion and a face inclining in outline to the oval, with a prominent aquiline nose, while from his chin and cheeks fell a full and majestic beard; his features were sharp, yet of noble cast, his brow expansive, bald and free from wrinkles, and from under his bushy eyebrows shone two clear, bright eyes sparkling with a subdued fire. The former was Peter, the latter Paul.*

Paul had almost completed a year of imprison-

* That such was the personal appearance of the two holy Apostles seems evident from the ancient monuments, writings and designs; and their perfect agreement seems to afford a strong argument in favor of their veracity. Much has been written on this subject; we will content ourselves with referring all those who may still entertain any doubts on the subject, to the dissertation of the illustrious antiquary, J. B. DE ROSSI, lately published in the *Omaggio Cattolico ai Principi degli Apostoli*—Rome, Sinimberghi, 1867, 8o., p. 233. We will only add that there still exists, as is well known, the impress of a human countenance on the wall of the Mamertine Prison, at the very spot where now is the descent into the Tullian dungeon. Tradition says that this is the profile of St. Peter which was miraculously stamped on the rock when the Apostle was on one occasion thrown against it by a brutal jailor. Now such an impression strongly supports the testimony of the other monuments, but it does not agree with a writer who describes his nose as large and turned up, whereas here it is straight and sharp, rather than otherwise, at least so it seemed to us, and we certainly examined the rock with the most minute attention and care.

ment; Peter had been nine months in captivity; and they had changed that murky dungeon into a bright temple of the wonders of God. A splendid proof of the power of God, which had come down into that gloomy abode together with the Apostles, was afforded by a band of soldiers, the chief of whom were Processus and Martinianus. These same men had bound Peter in chains on the very day Simon Magus met with his fatal fall; for Nero had ordered the arrest of Peter as the alleged author of the mishap.* They had very little trouble in finding

* It is almost impossible to get at the exact chronology of the last events in Peter's life. The *Acta SS. Processi et Martiniani*, relate that the flight of the Apostle was favored by those to whose keeping he had been entrusted. On the other hand, the author of the *Hist. Excid. Hierosol.* II, 2, says that the Saint withdrew from Rome after the fall of the magician, and St. Ambrose, *Serm. Contr. Auxent.* ch. 13, seems to agree with him in this view: either account may be true. All the above authors, however, with many others, agree in stating that after the affair of Simon Magus, Peter was imprisoned. We must remain satisfied with a probable chronology since we have no certain one. As for Nero's knowing the cause of his favorite's fall, there is nothing in the statement which is not very probable, if we consider the reputation Peter had already gained and his well known contests with Simon Magus. Besides, it is positively affirmed by the above eminent writers, as also by St. Maximus, of Turin, *Hom.* LXXII, *Ed. Migne* and by Arnobius, *Adv. Gent.* II, 12, who affirms that the fact was of public notoriety and was known moreover by the whole race of the Gentiles: "Viderant enim currum Simonis, et quadrigas igneas Petri ore difflatas, et nominato Christo evanuisse;" from

him, for the Apostle, warned by divine inspiration of the cross which God had prepared for him, not only showed himself freely among the faithful but even appeared openly before his persecutors. But they soon found themselves the captives of their own prisoner. They first became his admirers, then his disciples, finally his intimate companions; and when grace had fully done its work in their souls, they fell at his feet and begged to be admitted to the fountain of regenerating waters. To which request Peter consented.

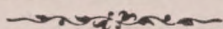
“Well,” exclaimed the neophytes, “why delay longer? We will go for water.”

“It is not necessary,” replied the Apostle, if God deems you worthy of His baptism, He will provide for the sacrament.”

With these words he bent forward to the ground and with his thumb traced the sign of the cross upon the hard rock. Suddenly the stone sinking under the sacred sign, formed a deep and ample basin, while from under the rock the stream of living water came gushing up, and pouring out its crystal waves, filled the basin to the very brim, but without overflowing.†

which fact he adduces an argument to prove their blindness inexcusable.

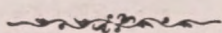
† For more than eighteen centuries this fountain continues to



At this wonderful sight the astonished legionaries uttered a loud cry and dragged their companions to the spot to witness the prodigy; and while the water came up from the ground the grace of God was poured down on them from above; in a word, the Tullian dungeon became one of the principal Churches of Rome, founded in the very bowels of the Capitolian hill, as if in defiance of the demon adored on its summit. Peter and Paul were the priests of the hidden temple, and its preachers too; Nero's legionaries were its faithful flock. Thus were the mysterious workings of divine mercy displayed, in that dismal receptacle of human wickedness.

From the day on which Peter gathered around him such a harvest of friends of God, the solitude of the place was at an end, and it was granted to the two Apostles to give a hearing to the neophytes eager for the divine word and for their holy counsels. Very often, too, Peter and Paul saw at their feet, Linus, already named the successor to the Vicar of Christ, Luke, Clement, Cornelius Pudens,

fill its little basin, and every one knows that though thousands and thousands of vials and other vessels have been filled from it (as happens annually at the great festivals of St. Peter and Paul), it never diminishes, just as it never runs over when it is left untouched.



and others of the early Saints of Rome. They came to seek consolation, to have their doubts dispelled by a ray of the apostolic light now hidden but not extinguished. In the depth of the night they were brought in by the attendants, more faithful to the commandments of God than to the tyrannical orders of Cæsar; they descended into the depths of this prison by a little ladder furnished by the keepers, who silently followed them, to have a part in the sacred banquet.

It was a sight which must have made the angels rejoice to see now ten, now more of the new brethren ranging themselves along the dark walls, while dimly visible in the flickering light of a hanging lantern, Peter and Paul stood up at the foot of the pillar, extending their manacled hands over the new converts to call down from the throne of the august Trinity the living flames of the Holy Spirit; or oftener standing at the wooden trestle-work altar, furnished by the rough legionaries, offering up the divine mysteries and distributing the divine bread among the faithful present.* Sometimes amid the silence of noon-day,† some pious matron, in the dress of a servant-maid, knelt upon the extreme

* *Acta SS. Processi et Martiniani*.—Apud Surium, 2d Julii.

† It may be necessary here to call attention to the use of the *Siesta* (the *hora sexta* of the Latin) so prevalent in Rome,

edge of the aperture in the ceiling, bringing some restoratives and delicacies to relieve the pains of imprisonment and of the stocks, and took back with her, in return, some fatherly admonition or some relief from sickness with the apostolic blessing. O, venerable Claudia! generous Lucina! Priscilla so charitable to the departed! Petronilla, Praxedes and Pudentiana, tender doves of Jesus Christ! O, all ye sisters of the ancient Roman Church, by how many chaste sighs did you consecrate that cruel dungeon! With what bitter tears did you water the entrance of that gloomy grave which kept hidden from your sight your teachers and your fathers! How often, while prostrate at that dark and narrow entrance have you strained your eyes to behold the loved features of Peter and Paul, who drew as near to the light as the length of their chains would allow, and consoled you with words of heavenly sweetness! And then the weeping jailers, now also children of Peter, joined their tears and sobs with those of the afflicted matrons; they lowered themselves into the pit to kiss the

Naples, and generally in warm climates, and which was held sacred even in the early ages, as may be gathered from the classic authors. Indeed the general suspension of all business and the perfect desertion of the streets made it more like an hour of the night.



fetters and the wounds of the Apostles in the name of the weeping visitors, and returned with some of the water which had been so miraculously produced.* How often those devoted sons urged upon the holy prisoners their request:

“Fathers, let us break these fetters.”

“No,” answered the Saints, “such is not God’s will.”†

From this secret council of the Mamertine went forth the apostolic oracles, and the soldiers of Cæsar became their messengers. Thence Paul maintained firm in their virtue the victims dragged to the imperial palace to satisfy the brutal passion of Nero.‡ Thence Peter gave his blessings to numerous bands of neophytes on their way to martyrdom and finally strengthened for the supreme contest his former jailers, now his fellow-prisoners and the sharers of his martyrdom. But before this last extremity had been reached, the tumult of profane Rome never found its way to them, they only heard the news from without when it bore on the interests of the Church.

It was in the early summer; Nero was running

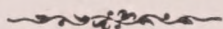
* Cf. *Acta SS. Processi et Martiniani.*

† *Act. SS. Proces. et Martin. ubi sup.*

‡ An ancient and authentic tradition. Vid. BARONIUS, *ann* 68, No. 25.

all the race-courses of Greece, always victor, always applauded, always triumphant. Meanwhile Rome began to hear the suppressed murmuring of secret but extensive conspiracies. Indeed the seeds of rebellion had been prodigally sown by the imperial officers left to rule the city. Aelius and Polycletus, who held the reins of power in the name of Nero, partly through a naturally perverse disposition, partly to supply the extravagant outlays of their master, daily multiplied executions, confiscations, and all manner of intolerable outrages. When they perceived that their authority was beginning to stagger and that the reins were falling from their hands, they besought Nero to return at once and to look the affairs of the Empire in the face. At last Nero seemed to feel once more that he was Emperor; he now threw aside the crowns of the Grecian games rather than lose the imperial diadem, and ordered the hundred galleys which were to restore him to the loved shores of Italy. The news was received at Rome with a cry of terror.

Amid the general trepidation, Demetrius, the Cynic, made almost daily visits to the mansion of Cornelius Pudens, who treated him with every mark of most flattering kindness, without, however, betraying the cruel anguish rending his heart. Thus he managed to gather the news of the day



and to keep the holy Apostles informed of it in their captivity.

"I have been looking for you with some impatience," said Pudens to the philosopher, one day ; "without your presence the dining-hall seems empty, nothing seems savory, nothing pleases me."

"Too much honor," replied Demetrius, "for a poor Cynic's wallet ! But to-day I deserve more and greater."

"Is there any news?"

"News !" answered the Cynic, prolonging his lips into a pout and snapping his fingers violently ; "give me the run of your table until the next consulate, and even then the reward will not bear any proportion to the value of my information."

"Come, out with it ! What is this great news?"

"Cæsar," replied Demetrius, measuring his syllables, "Cæsar is perhaps food for fishes at this very moment."

"Are you in earnest now?"

"I would that I were as sure of the fact as I am that it is certainly probable."

"How do you know it?"

"From every point about the Mediterranean Sea we hear that such foul portents were never seen before. The beach is covered with bruised seaweeds, here and there planks, broken masts,

shattered rudders, cordage, and ship furniture, are cast up by the waves. If our good friend had really set out, then it is certainly all over with him; for by this time he is safely settled in Neptune's domain."

"But have Aelius and Polycletus no tidings of him?"

"They must certainly have heard something; but they play ignorant."

"I heard that he had most certainly started already; we saw it in the daily journal."*

"The desirable thing is that he should have gotten out into the high seas in time to fall in with the storm. I see to-day in the journal that our most illustrious masters are loudly singing their hymns of praise; that the sea was as smooth as oil, that the gods guided the prow, that the Tritons guarded the helm, the Nereids caressed the sides, carried on their dances amid the seats of the rowers, and even stroked affectionately the divine countenance of Augustus. All this is anti-bilious to me, for I have learned to take the sayings of those good gentlemen by contraries."

"Then you think the news good and reliable?"

"I cannot yet give it full and unwavering belief, by reason of that little scene in the senate."

* The *Acta Diurna* already described in a previous number.

— — — — —
“What little scene do you mean?”

“What! You a senator, and ask this of me? Must I pull it out of my poor little wallet to put it into your laticlave?”

“You know that I am not always in the senate; I am still something of an invalid.”

“At any rate, you know that there have been many dangers mentioned which might threaten the life of the travelling divinity.”

“So I have heard.”

“You must also have heard that at the mention of these things the senators sprang up from their curule chairs like mad-men, and that the hall resounded with such cries, as: “My blood curdles at the very thought!” “I do not wish to live longer, if Cæsar is to be subjected to any perils!” “I am lost, ruined, undone, if this be so!” “Woe to the Republic, if Cæsar meets a human fate!” In a word they vied with one another in devoting themselves to the worst of fates. Therefore, I say, they considered the tidings false and the danger only imaginary.

“What a very fox are you, my Cynic.”

“How? It does not require much wit to know that if they had thought the account probable they would at once have ordered to the stake Aelius, Polycletus, and those other fine fellows whose feet

they now slavishly kiss: nay, I can almost believe that they would have eaten them alive in the very Basilica. The fact is that the mere mention of such a thing as a possible shipwreck, makes me fear that my lord may already have actually landed. Nobody can take it out of my head that this was a mere shift to distinguish the doubtful adherents from the reliable sycophants.”*

“How can you claim your reward from me for such news as this?”

“How! Why the mere hope that he may very soon be ranked among the gods is not to be despised. Certainly there is the pro and con, but it is always a consolation to my piety.”

On another occasion, the Cynic entered the atrium of the senator, his face flushed, an expression of disgust on all his features, and blowing like a tempest. As soon as he caught sight of his patron

* “It was hoped that in this storm (*χειμῶνος*) he (*Nero*) might have perished. But the hope was deceived, for he escaped; and the expression of the desire or hope of such a fate was for many the occasion of destruction.” DIO CASSIUS, *Histor. Rom.* XLIII, 19. From which passage some writers seem to infer that Nero’s voyage to Italy was made in the winter; but for this there is no foundation as the word *χειμῶν* used by Dio, is equal to the Latin *hiems* which means a storm, as often as it does winter.

he broke out without preface: "Bad luck to all the gods and goddesses of the sea! They never do one a single good turn! Do you know what? Not a bit of shipwreck; he has landed at Brundisium, and they say that he is on his way to Naples. It is plain that even the meanest fishes would have nothing to do with his carcass."

"Speak lower!"

"Yes, yes; to the shades with these dainty fishes! They had the morsel in their mouths, and they were fools enough to spit it out. May Proteus fry them for it!"

"Keep your temper, my Cerberus. The best plan would be for you to go yourself to meet him, and with your graceful manners and demonstrations of joyful greeting——"

Demetrius interrupted him with a grunt of disgust: "I know what demonstrations I would show him! But there is no need of my going to meet him, he is already on his way to meet me. At Antium, at Albanum, divine honors await him; triumphal arches, altars at every point of the journey, victims, showers of roses, music, incense—all is prepared. The people talk of nothing but sacrifices, vows, and games, to be celebrated in thanksgiving to the gods. The shops of the saffron

dealers have been sacked to gild the very streets.”*

“Do you consider that extravagant?”

“No, indeed, I should be willing to gild the ground with refined gold for him, if it would but open under his feet.”

“Why, what a zeal for getting him out of the way! But might not the next one be worse?”

“I don’t believe it.”

“But see, you still live; and though you are every day uttering the most furious invectives against him, who touches a hair of your head?”

“That is because I croak in the ditch, like the frogs, and he does not notice me; but should I happen to croak a little too distinctly, I know who is listening to me.”

“At any rate you are wrong. If you call down destruction on his head in this style, what is to become of those who are in prison with the axe already raised over their necks?”

“For the present they may breathe freely; the axe is not raised in the Mamertine, be sure of that. He has no time to think of that now; his head is full enough of the rumors from Greece; at most he will twist the necks of a pair of fat capons, by way of greasing his wheels.”†

* SUET. *Nero*, n. 25. † DIO CASSIUS, *Hist. Rom.* LXIII, 18.


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“You mean a couple of Senators, eh?”

“Who knows? Aelius does not look only to the feathers, he knows what is underneath; his eye is on those consulars who have fattened on the provinces.”

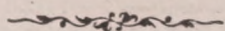
“Come,” said Pudens, breaking off the conversation, “let us turn to some more cheerful topic.”

The hour which Nero had chosen for his triumphal entry into Rome, was the one selected by Pudens for conferring with Peter and Paul. It was a singularly favorable moment and one least open to detection; for all Rome was running headlong to welcome its *beloved* Augustus, and few troubled themselves about the prisons or about those who were left to perish in them. The immense procession halted shortly after crossing the Almon, for the purpose of regulating the order of the march. Meanwhile detachments had been sent forward to break down the Porta Capena, while others, with battering-rams destroyed one pier of the Circus Maximus, to admit him like an *Iselasticus*, since he had carried off the honors in the Olympic, the Pythic, the Isthmian and Nemean games, with hundreds of other less valuable prizes.\*

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\* Suet. *ubi sup.* DIO, n. 20. The name *Iselasticus* was given to those games, which gained to the victor the honor of entering the city through a breach in the walls, on a triumphal chariot,





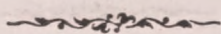
The emperor was preceded by a thousand Augustans, licentious and arrogant youths, the usual escort of Nero, whose office it seemed to be to applaud him at every point.\* They bore upon rich tablets at least eighteen hundred crowns, won, as they asserted, by Augustus in the contests at the games of all Greece. Before each crown was carried an inscription, borne aloft on a spear, describing the nature of the victory: "Nero, first among the Romans, crowned for skill at the cestus—in leaping—in hurling the javelin—in boxing—in wrestling—in the discus—in the pancratiun—in the race—in satirical composition—in tragedy—in eloquence—in singing—on the cithara—on the flute—in dancing—in a word there was not a Grecian crown that he had not won, even including the prize for pitching out of his chariot in the midst of an Olympic contest and rolling in the dust like a piece of dough that is rolled in flour. Notwithstanding this, the crown for incomparable skill in the Olympic games did not fail him, and Nero wore it upon his brow, a crown of the greenest olive, while his right hand grasped the pythic laurel. He paraded thus in a cloak of cloth of gold, over which was thrown

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bearing a crown and a palm branch, with the perpetual right of living at the public expense.

\* *TAC. Ann.*, XIV, 15.





a light purple mantle spangled with stars; and he rode in the same chariot in which the first Augustus was wont to be borne along in triumph.\*

Along the road he was continually passing under triumphal arches bearing pompous and exaggerated inscriptions, while at various points between, altars were erected upon which were smoking the victims offered to his divinity. On the way trod by a god it was not enough to strew the fragrant herbs usual in mortal triumphs; it was little to cover it with leaves of roses even. Troops of boys and girls of illustrious descent went before, throwing down handfuls of saffron-dust, so that the ground was gilded by it. The houses from the Porta Capena to the Velabrum and the Forum were decorated with festoons and garlands of flowers. Rich incense burned before every door, while from the balconies a perfect shower of confits and flowers was poured down upon the "soldiers of the triumph," as Nero called the Augustans. Amid this shower, a hundred little winged divinities floated in mid-air, with purple streamers flying from their feet.†

The crowd was literally packed in the streets; the Roman knights and senators seemed even more enthusiastic than the people, and shouted like mad-

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\* SUET. *ubi sup.* DIO, *ubi sup.*

† SUET. and DIO, *loc. cit.*





men: Long live Nero the Olympic! Long life to the Nemean hero! Hail to the Pythian Augustus! Glory to the Isthmian! Augustus forever! Hail Nero, second Hercules! Apollonian Nero! Augustus! Augustus! Divine voice! Happy he who hears that voice! Such extravagances as these were repeated and taken up by the Augustans who preceded and those who followed the car of triumph. Meanwhile a Grecian harper rose up at the side of the conqueror and prepared to sing his pæan, looking from time to time upon the Emperor, but always bending the knee before him as if overcome by awe before the present deity.\*

Thus did Nero go up by the Sacred street to the temple of Capitoline Jupiter, and passing under the arch of Nero, went down by the descent near the Asylum, which route led him along the walls of the Mamertine Prison, before entering the Forum, on his way to the shrine of Apollo in the palace.†

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\* DIO CASSIUS, l. c.—Did not such a people deserve such a ruler?

† SUET. *Nero*, 25, does not describe the triumphal procession to the Capitol; he only says; “Dehinc diruto circi Maximi arcu, per Velabrum, Forumque, Palatinum et Apollinem petiit.” But DIO, l. c., expressly states, that “he went up to the Capitol and thence to the Palatine.” And certainly in a triumph for artistic excellence, not for military achievements, the procession should naturally have ended at the shrine of the god of Art, and not at that of Capitoline Jupiter. There were two routes by



As he passed along the front of that stern façade hardly adorned with a few carved festoons, he was reminded by the applause from the roof of the prison, that it was an old custom of Roman conquerors, to send the vanquished leaders here to be put to death.

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which the procession might reach the summit of the Capitolium—the Capitolium slope, the shortest way for one coming up from the Velabrum, and by the ascent of the Asylum on the opposite side—but both ascents began in the Forum. To discover the route chosen by Nero we must notice that he came from Albanum and entered at the Porta Capena. Then having passed through the Sacred street—the usual route of triumphal processions—which ran between the Celian and Capitoline hills, he went straight to the Circus Maximus, then to the Velabrum and through the Forum, passing through the Tuscan or Jugarian lanes, which would be the most direct way. Then he would find himself before the Tiberian arch, where both the Jugarian lane and the Sacred street came to an end; this point is not far from the present Santa Maria Liberatrice. At the arch of Tiberius began the ascent to the Capitolium, the ascent of which was called the Sacred slope or *Summa Via Sacra*. So he would naturally go up by this way; and if so, he must necessarily have descended by the declivity of the Asylum. This slope passed through the Intermontium, the modern Capitol square, almost where the hand-rail for the use of foot-passengers is now seen, only that for vehicles there was a slight turn to the left, following the direction of the lane of San Pietro in Carcere, then turning towards the Forum it entered near the point where still stands the arch of Severus. Thus it is plain that the procession must have passed before the Mamertine Prison a little before returning from the Capitol to the Forum. Nero crossed this space diagonally, following the direction of the modern promenade, and ascended to the Palace on the Palatine, opposite the Church of Santa Francesca Romana.



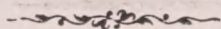
Turning to Tigellinus, he said: "To-day I have no enemies; see that you find me what I want by to-morrow."

And he did not remember that whilst he, of all criminals the most criminal, was glorying in his triumphal car, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul were close beside him, wasting away in an unwholesome dungeon, by his own order. There a little earthen lamp, hanging by a string, the other end of which was fastened to a stone resting on the edge of the narrow opening, cast a dim light around the subterranean chamber; but it was enough for Pudens, who sat at a kind of little table or desk, just before the two Apostles, and was writing, at the dictation of Peter, that Apostle's last epistle to the rising Church.\* Safe from any danger of interruption, while the imperial pageant absorbed all attention without, Peter turned his thoughts to the universal Church and left it this last farewell, this enduring testament and irrefragable prophecy.

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\* Of the 2d epistle of St. Peter, CORNELIUS A LAPIDE, says: "Liquet scriptam esse Romæ, e carcere, ut videtur, Mamertino." Who the amanuensis may have been—if indeed there was one—does not appear, though we may well suppose that it was St. Pudens. This is not contradicted by the passage in CLEMENT of Alexandria, *Strom.* VII, 17, where he speaks of a certain Glaucia, who acted as interpreter for St. Peter; for the writer mentions neither time nor place.





Standing erect at the foot of the pillar to which he was chained, with Paul close beside him, he began : “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them who have obtained equal faith with us, in the justice of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” And then with his arms crossed upon his breast, his countenance turned upward, with beaming brow and kindling eyes as one who reads the awful secrets of Heaven, he resumed, in a few points, the precepts of the gospel-law. He reminded all, that by its faithful observance man perseveres in divine grace and is supported by the participation with the divine nature ; that no one should deceive himself by reliance on a dead faith, but that by means of faithful endeavors they should secure their vocation.

“Oh ! Father,” interrupted the good neophyte Pudens, with modest anxiety, “I have heard this made a difficulty by many brethren anxious for their eternal salvation. What if we are not destined for heaven ? If we were one day to fall back into sin, like Simon, the magician, even after baptism ? What would it profit us then to have been called to the grace of the faith ?”

To which Peter replied with a smile of singular sweetness : “As a consolation to your own vain fear and to that of others add this sentence : ‘Wherefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good



works you may make sure your vocation and election: for doing these things, you shall not sin at any time. For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Now, my son, are you satisfied?"

"Thanks, Father," answered Pudens, "these words alone, from your lips, make me bless a thousand times the hour in which I came down into this prison! I shall repeat them to all, to all. When I hear from any one that impious expression: If God has destined me to be saved, I shall be saved in spite of everything; and if God has decreed that I shall be damned, I shall be damned without remedy; therefore it is foolish to trouble myself about doing good or evil,—Fool! I shall say to him, with your wrong principles you draw a conclusion wholly false. It is yours, by the use or by the abuse of grace, by good or by bad deeds, to carry out what God has decreed. So strive to secure your vocation and election by good works."\*

Peter then went on to say that the putting off of

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\* Cf. A LAP. on these words of St. Peter, in his II, Ep., I, 10; "Satagite ut per bona opera certam vestram vocationem et electionem faciatis: hæc enim facientes non peccabitis aliquando." Then the learned Commentator, by the power of reasoning and the help of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church explains at length the doctrines which here are merely mentioned.



this tabernacle was near at hand; but that still it seemed just to him, as long as he remained in this tabernacle, to stir them up by admonition, to renew the memory of the truths already familiar to them, just as he had received them from the lips of Jesus Christ, of Whose greatness he had been an eye-witness on Mount Thabor; and that even after his decease he would endeavor that they should frequently have wherewith they might keep a memory of those things. Then he bore witness to the Sacred Writings, which he said, were inspired by the Holy Ghost, and were given to the Church, to be as a light kindled at the flame of the uncreated light, to shine through the darkness of the world; but he warned them to understand this first, "that no prophecy of the Scripture is made by private interpretation."\* Having thus summed up the teachings of divine revelation and pointed out the twofold teaching of scripture and tradition, he gave

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\* Hoc primum intelligentes, quod omnis prophetia scripturæ propria interpretatione non fit." II Petr. I, 20. *Prophetia Scripturæ*, is here used by St. Peter in the same sense as by St. Luke and St. Paul, viz: of exposition, comment or explanation. Cf. *Act. Apost.* XXI, 9; I, *Cor.* the whole XIV chapter. In the early Church the gift of prophetic explanation, though frequent, yet was not common; "numquid omnes prophetæ?" 1, *Cor.* XII, 29.

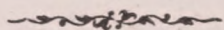


a last blow to the corrupters of the pure deposit of faith—the heretics.

Better directed or more powerful thunderbolts were never hurled against the rebels to the divine word, than those contained in that short letter, the testament of Peter. He describes them not in words but with flashes of lightning; he traces out their ignoble origin, their malicious disposition, their execrable habits of life, and shows the certain ruin, the threatening judgment, the unavoidable punishment which awaits them. The hand of Pudens trembled as he wrote these lines; Paul, with his face buried in his hands, was awaiting the end. At this moment was heard the noise of Nero's triumph approaching the prison, the confused and frantic outcries of the multitude seemed to rise above the stars; the thundering and creaking of the chariots as they rolled along the street above, resounded even down in the deep dungeon of the Mamertine Prison. Pudens had just written these words: "But the heavens which now are, and the earth, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of wicked men."

Pudens laid down his pen and looked up at the Apostle with an expression of doubt and astonishment which seemed to say: "But meanwhile these





wicked men triumph and we are here in tribulation ; and God does not seem to help His own."

Peter, who read the thoughts of his heart, said to him : " Why are you fearful ? Are you scandalized at the passing prosperity of a wicked man ? Write : ' But be not ignorant, my beloved, of this one thing, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord delayeth not his promise as some imagine ; but beareth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence ; and the elements shall be dissolved with heat ; and the earth, and the works that are in it, shall be burnt up. Seeing then, that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of people ought you to be in holy conversations and godliness, waiting for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of the Lord, by which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the burning heat of fire ? But we look for new heavens and a new earth, according to His promise, in which justice dwelleth.' " \*

" Father," exclaimed Pudens, " by these words you

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\* II, Petr. III, 7-14.



have plucked a thorn out of my heart, and will yet pluck it out of many others. I understand now that the certain and everlasting punishment of crime cannot be long delayed."

"Has not our Brother Paul already said the same, in his many letters," replied Peter, "and even lately to the Romans?"\*

"I remember," said Pudens, "but '*repetita juvant*,' and now I understand them more clearly."

"You know," said Paul, turning with a smile to Peter, "that not all understand my letters at the first reading; it is not, therefore, surprising that Pudens should not have caught their whole meaning at once. But not only that! Some turn them wholly away from their real sense, so as to make them mean the exact opposite of what we teach."

"Yes," replied Peter, "I know who these are. But now Pudens will apply the healing ointment to their eyes." And he continued to dictate: "Wherefore, dearly beloved, waiting for these things, be diligent that you may be found before Him unspotted and blameless in peace: and account the long-bearing of our Lord, salvation; as also our most dear brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, hath written to you. As also in all

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\* Cf. I, Cor. III, 13-16; Hebr. ch's. III and IV, and X, 36-39; Rom. II, 4-8.





his epistles speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as also the other scriptures, to their own perdition. You, therefore, brethren, knowing these things before, beware; lest, being led away by the error of the unwise, you fall from your own steadfastness. But increase in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen."\*

"Blessed be God!" exclaimed Paul, "Who hath inspired thee to warn the faithful against the corrupters of the divine word, for it is not ours, but of the Holy Ghost. How much agony it has caused me to see those new teachers, with the Sacred Writings in hand, placing a stumbling block in the way of so many, many souls!"

"Unhappy men!" exclaimed Pudens, recalling the words of Paul, for he knew most of his letters by heart: "It is of them that you wrote: 'From which things some going astray are turned aside to vain talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither the things they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.'"<sup>†</sup>

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\* II, Peter. III, 14, et seqq.

† These are the words of St. Paul, I Tim. I, 6-9. And it is



“You have it perfectly!” said Peter to the Senator; “you have it perfectly. The interpretation of the Scriptures is not a thing of private judgment. The Scripture is a two-edged sword and should not be put into the hands of an inexperienced person. Bread and wine are very good for nourishment, but to little children they should be administered by a careful mother.”

“Oh! Father, I shall not soon forget this. My soul is still shuddering at the very thought of the blasphemous interpretations of Simon Magus.”

“Well,” concluded Peter, “take that parchment to my brethren Linus, Cletus and Clement. If your good girls will make some copies of it, they will receive a reward from God and the gratitude of the Church.”

“And from you and from Paul, my revered Masters,” said Pudens, throwing himself on his knees before the Apostles and kissing their chains. They raised him up, embraced him affectionately and

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worth remarking that from the very earliest times heresies were broached in the name of the Bible. Simon Magus and his followers quoted it copiously in all their discourses. This is a remark of St. Augustine, and it is confirmed by the early historians of the individual heresies. We should not, therefore, be surprised to find St. Paul warning the Christians of the danger; and St. Peter, in his last farewell to the Church, putting the faithful on their guard against such corrupters.



gave him their blessing for himself and all his holy family.

The Christian Senator issued from the Mamertine and mingled in the crowd, which was at that moment pouring out of the Forum.

Nero, on reaching his palace, began to calculate the amount of proscription and confiscation that would be necessary to pay off the expenses of his extravagant display.







## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LAST DAYS OF PETER AND PAUL.

ROME was full of the splendid triumph of Augustus; it was the common topic both in the gatherings of the people and in the social meeting of the higher classes. The clubs of the Augustans, the dressing-rooms of the imperial troupe and all the rendezvous of the more insignificant hangers-on about the court were repeating the current talk with the additional ornament of the Grecian feats: "Hercules, with his twelve labors, would not, by a great deal, have made a better show of it than did Nero; but the most wonderful thing of all was the way in which the undaunted Cæsar has brought so many great undertakings to a glorious end, in the course of a few months; certainly Nero could never have sprung from human parents, he was a god as great as Jupiter, best and greatest; perhaps even greater. Olympus has recognized him, let Rome remember this in her need." These



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stupid exaggerations of flattery brought the blush of shame to the brow of the few honorable men who still bore a Roman heart within their breasts. The wealthy were calculating the resources of the imperial treasury, now entirely drained, and of their own purses which would inevitably be called upon to replenish it; every citizen of any note was in constant dread lest each hour of the day might bring to their doors an imperial order of imprisonment and death, which orders were generally accompanied by one of Nero's physicians, with the command to see to a speedy execution.*

The Christians, on the other hand, fearless and ready for any event, were perfectly resigned to all misfortunes, individual or general. Here was indeed a new people; a chosen, a heavenly people growing up in the midst of an earthly and groveling nation; but as its aspirations were lofty, wholly foreign to the universal spirit of corruption, it never experienced the same unholy joys or useless griefs. The throne of Augustus would have stood longer had the doting people of Quirinus allowed itself to be strengthened and rejuvenated, and joined its des-

* "Mori jussis non amplius quam horarum spatium dabat (Nero). Ac ne quid moræ interveniret, medicos admovebat, qui cunctantes continuo curarent: ita enim vocabat, venas mortis gratia incidere." SÜET. *Nero*, n. 37.

tinies to those of the virgin people rising up within its walls. So far as the Christians were concerned, there had been no triumph of Nero; few of them had witnessed it; they looked upon the Emperor pretty much as they would upon a plague, trusting that Providence would soon send them better times. They never thought of him save to accept his yoke; in a word, they lived faithful to their earthly country, but strangers to its vices, and as such, with minds and hearts in a better land.

Within the domestic walls their conversations turned still upon the glories and the sufferings of their beloved Apostles in captivity; they delighted to speak of their wonderfully successful apostolate in the prison itself, and to repeat the words they chanced to have heard from them. Thus when some one of the faithful succeeded in gaining access to the Tullian prison, the brethren flocked eagerly around him, on his return, to hear what each one of the Apostles had said to him, and these expressions were treasured up with the greatest care and reverence; so that the voice of the Apostles, though apparently silenced, continued to resound through the families of the neophytes and in the meetings of the faithful. Thus did the Christians learn the least details of the fall of Simon the magician. Paul had joined his prayer to that

of Peter, at one and the same moment, and thus united in spirit, they had risen up to beg of God the humiliation of the wicked imposter, the one on the Sacred Street, the other in the depth of the Tullian prison.*

“Oh! how I should like to know the prayer that Peter offered then!” exclaimed Pudentiana on hearing the account from her father.

“Nothing more simple,” said Pudens, “I have it from the lips of Peter himself, and it is the very same you would have made yourself, had you seen the magician going up, ‘Lord Jesus,’ he said, ‘let this poor wretch learn the impotence of his arts, and let not those already true to the faith be scandalized by this wonder. Grant, O Lord, that he may fall, but let him survive to acknowledge his own powerlessness.’”†

* Even this little item of tradition we love to gather up with studious care; especially as we find that several Fathers and early writers take pains to bring out the fact that Peter and Paul prayed together on that occasion. Among others Vid. Sulp. Sev. *Hist. Sacr.* II, 27; S. Cyrill, Hieros. *Catech.* VI, 15; S. Maxim. Taurin. *Hom.* LXXII, ed Migne. St. Isidore of Seville is more explicit than any of the others; he says in his *Chronica*: “Adjurante eos (dæmones) Petro, per Deum, Paulo vero orante, (Simon) dimissus crepuit,” this seems to us to conciliate the various traditions.

† This prayer is found in the work *De Excid. Hieros.* II, 2. In the *Constit. Apost.* VI, 9, there is a more elaborate prayer, but it shows too much evidence of interpolation.

"And with that little prayer," exclaimed Pudentiana, "Peter caused his fall?"

"What! does it seem trifling to you?" interrupted her sister Praxedes; "would not the name of Jesus Christ alone have been enough, and from the lips of Peter? What seems strange to me is that the magician should have been allowed even to rise at all."

"Rather," interposed the Senator, "it was best as it was; to let his enemy, or rather the enemy of God, rise up on high, and then with a little word to give him a plunge and bring him down."

"And moreover," added Claudia, "Simon should consider himself under obligations to Peter for having saved his life; for naturally, falling from such a height he must have broken his neck twice over and have been dashed to pieces on the pavement like a toad."

"But is he really alive?" asked Pudentiana.

"No," answered Pudens, "but he survived the fall, and so well too, that his disciples carried him to Aricia for the cure of his mangled hands and feet and dislocated limbs."

"He must have repented after such a lesson."

"Repented! Yes, after such a fashion that he had pride enough to wish to attempt a second flight; he jumped from the balcony of a country-house of

his, which he called Brunda, and was injured worse than the first time."

"And did he not die this time?"

"Yes, but not immediately, and not even after the fall."

"See! What obstinacy! How good is God to give him so much time for repentance!"

"And yet it is useless. For when he saw himself so bruised and shattered, weary of life and despairing of ever being able to restore his reputation, he called his disciples around him and said to them: 'All these bodily injuries I have inflicted on myself of my own free-will, to confirm you in my teachings; for just as you now see me, I shall soon die, and on the third day I shall rise again from death to life.'"

"And did they believe him?" asked both sisters in a breath.

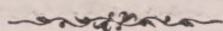
"Indeed they did. They dug the grave at once and buried him alive as he was."

"Alive? The cruel men!"

"No; it was his own wish and command."

"How God blinds the proud! That poor wretch who pretended to fly up to heaven, soon after, through very shame, has himself hidden away underground. These are punishments from God!"*

* The author of the work *De Excid. Hierosol. ubi sup.*, says: "Fracto debilitatoque crure Aritiam concessit." ARNOBIUS,



Such were the sentiments and conversations of the faithful, so long as there was a ray of hope that the blessed Apostles might regain their freedom. And wonderful were the rejoicings when they

Adv. Gent. II, 12, adds; "Perlatum Brundam, cruciatibus ex pudore defessum ex altissimi culminis se rursus præcipitasse fastigio." The author of the *Philosophumena*. VI, I, 20, concludes that being now "destined to be deceived because he persisted too much (or because he was growing too old, for both these meanings may be drawn from the expression διὰ το ἐν χρονίζειν,) he gave out that if he were buried alive he would rise again on the third day. He then directed his disciples to dig his grave and to bury him in it. They did as he ordered; and there he remains to this day, because he was not the Christ." We have blended these various traditions as is becoming in a legend. As for Brunda, we do not know certainly where or what it was. The distinguished writer Fabiani lately endeavored to show that it was the Brontium (βροντεῖον), a theatrical machine for producing the imitation of thunder: but much as we should desire to agree with the illustrious Commentator we cannot accept this explanation; for, not to mention other reasons, from Brunda Simon cast himself down, "ex fastigio altissimi," whereas the Brontium was kept under the stage; and moreover it does not seem at all credible that a man maimed in both hands and feet should immediately afterwards have himself carried on the Brontium to the top of the stage machinery to try his flight again. Concerning the residence of Simon at Aricia, LUCIDIUS, *Mem. Ster. dell' Aric.* II, 1, p. 317, very learnedly discourses on a temple raised there to St. Peter in honor of his triumph over Simon Magus; he also speaks of a sarcophagus in which local traditions say that the ashes of Simon Magus were preserved: but this writer does not think that the style of the sculpture corresponds with that of the Neronian age.

learned the new conquests made by Peter and Paul; especially were they gladdened by the conversion of the soldiers in charge of the prison, for besides the good done to their souls, the soldiers afforded a new means of communicating with the prisoners, and were most faithful messengers between the Apostles and the faithful. But their joy at this acquisition was equalled now by their grief at its loss; for it was soon discovered by the heathens that the soldiers belonged to the new superstition, as they then styled the Christian religion, and the converts passed from the position of guards over the Apostles to the honor of being their companions in captivity and their followers to martyrdom.*

From that time forth, communication with the Apostles was almost entirely cut off; matters only grew worse, too, after Nero had returned to the palace with a mind overcome by the blind terror of conspiracies. It was feared that the report of the conversion in the prison might exasperate the bloody monster and drive him on to pronounce the final sentence on all the prisoners. Every lingering hope was beginning to fade; Jesus Christ had foretold to Peter the manner of his death, by violence; the last letter of Peter, dictated in his

* *Act. SS. Process. et Martinian.*, SURIUS, June 2d and BARON, ann. 68, n. 23.

dungeon, was like a last will, and bore moreover the open announcement of his approaching death. It would be impossible to describe the sighs and tears with which the reading of this letter was received in the assemblies of the faithful in Rome. The brethren now lived in continual fear and trembling; and not without good reason. How could Nero help remembering Peter and Paul, when they had been publicly accused before him? And even if he could have forgotten that, would they not be recalled to his mind by the many conversions they had wrought during his own stay in Greece? Could the report of their wonderful works, which was now filling Rome, escape his ears? Would not the Jews be only too glad of this opportunity to satisfy their rage at the number of deserters from the Synagogue? And the Simonians, now quite numerous and excited to the highest pitch of malice, how could they be expected not to run their victims to the death?*

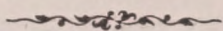
*Following the traditions which are invalidated by no historical document, we cannot agree with those who would place the martyrdom of St. Peter before the return of Nero from Achaia. We have not yet found one positive confirmation of this latter opinion. We follow the common belief which places the martyrdom of Peter and Paul under Nero, and under Nero present in Rome, at least, if not at the scene of the martyrdom, as some writer has represented him.



Praxedes and Pudentiana, besides the common affliction, were also deeply grieved when they thought of their beloved sister Thecla, whom they had invited to Rome, in the name of Peter. Their sorrow was increased by the thought that she might come too late to see her beloved master Paul alive, or at least only to see him prepare for the fatal block, and then lose him forever. The three bishops, Linus, Cletus and Clement, vicars of St. Peter, in Rome,* and depositories of the most intimate apostolic secrets, now spoke of nothing else but the manner of solemnizing the triumph of their blessed fathers. But still they were alive to every rumor, so as not to be taken by surprise, and so that the Christians, warned of every new feature in the case of the Apostles, might follow them with their fervent prayers and devotions to their last hour. They held frequent consultations with Luke the evangelist, also with Titus and Timothy, fervent disciples who had been summoned to Rome from their episcopal sees of Candia and Ephesus, as well as with other older dignitaries of the Church, to take measures in the extreme difficulties of the times.†

* Cf. Bianchim, Ciacconio, Pagi, et al. in the notes to ANAST. BIBL. *Vitæ Rom. Pont.* ed Migne, t. I, pp. 1034-1114.

† St. Titus had already been placed over the Church in Crete,



Finally the report went abroad that Nero had ordered that the Capitoline prison should be emptied; it was but too well known how this process of emptying was generally carried on. Pudens taking the matter earnestly in hand, carried it on so vigorously that, between personal influence and liberal use of gold, he obtained certain information that a capital sentence was prepared by Nero against Peter and Paul: he knew the very day and hour destined for its execution. The news flew like lightning through all the churches in Rome.*

It was the fourth day before the kalends of July; in the palace of the Senator Pudens the leading members of the Christian Church had met in

Tit. I, 5, and had, a short time previously, been sent to set in order the Churches of Dalmatia, *II Tim.* IV, 10. But it is probable that, having learned the danger of the Apostles, he came to Rome at once, as we find it stated in the *Passio Sti. Pauli* (*Biblioth. SS. PP.* of LA BIGNE, t. I,) attributed to St. Linus; this document is apocryphal, as all know, but yet it is not wholly without historical value. The presence of St. Timothy is much more probable, for St. Paul, while in prison, had urged him to come to Rome: "Festina ante hiemem venire," *II Tim.* IV, 21; and Timothy was a friend of the family of Pudens: "Salutant te Eubulus, et Pudens et Claudia," *Ibid.* Both Saints are represented as in Rome at this time, by HALLOIX, *Vita S. Dionys. Areop.* Cap. IX.

* That this sentence was pronounced by Nero in person is an ancient tradition founded upon the various acts of Sts. Peter and Paul; and, what is more, several Fathers and old ecclesiastical writers seem to bear the same witness very clearly.



mournful assembly. Besides the priests, there were several illustrious Roman citizens, among whom might be seen Acilius, Glabro and Flavius Clemens, afterwards Consuls, and Eubulus, the freedman. The greater portion of the sisters were there, too; for in the task of attending to the martyrs, they were accustomed, by an acknowledged right, to claim the principal part. This assembly was the saddest perhaps, they had ever held, and all were nearly mute with grief; they had hardly the courage to look one another in the face, to confer in subdued whispers, in words broken by sighs and tears. Linus proposed that the matrons alone should, according to the usual custom, follow and wait upon the Apostles, as they would incur less danger; that the remainder of the faithful should try to mingle with the crowd of spectators, so as not to be discovered: that only a few priests should attend, to render such services as might be necessary.

All assented to the proposal of Linus, whom they knew to have been appointed by Peter as his successor in the apostolic chair. It only remained to choose those who should attend to the martyrs; the eyes of all turned to Plautilla, a venerable matron of the Flavian house, and Pomponia Græcina, as if to point them out for so honorable a

prerogative. And upon them, in fact, the choice did fall, for they who had already given the last rites to countless martyrs, certainly deserved this honor. To these were added two other noble ladies, Anastasia and Basilissa, as aids, with Claudia Sabinilla, who, besides other numerous claims upon the Church, had a right to this privilege, as hostess of the Apostles.* These pious matrons thanked Linus and the brethren for this coveted honor, with tears of mingled grief and gratitude, and rather by signs than words.

No one imagined that another attendant of the martyrs was coming to them from afar and unexpected. While the chosen ones were dividing among themselves the duties incumbent upon each, Pudentiana entered the hall, with a flushed face; without stopping to look at any one she went straight to her mother and whispered in her ear:

“Do you know? Thecla is here!”

* Plautilla (of whom we have already spoken at some length) is mentioned in the *Passio S. Pauli*, quoted above. Pomponia Græcina seems to be mentioned in the same place, on the supposition adopted by us, that she is the same with the St. Lucina there spoken of, and well known in the old martyrologies—June 30th—as a follower of the Apostles. For Sts. Anastasia and Basilissa, see BARONIUS, in his notes to the *Martyrol. Rom.*, April 15th, where both are said to have suffered martyrdom for having taken charge of the bodies of Sts. Peter and Paul,

“Where?”

“In the ante-chamber, near the hall; she has asked for you.”

Claudia could not contain her emotion and said aloud:

“Thecla of Iconium has just arrived in the house.”

“Bring her in,” said Linus, who knew her well, (and who did not know Thecla in the Church of God?) “Pudentiana, do you and your sister accompany her.”

Pudens and Claudia went out to meet her. In a few moments the little hands of Pudentiana had reopened the door and Claudia entered leading by the hand an aged lady of most noble mien, but wan, wrinkled, wasted, bending forward in an attitude of deep humility. She wore a brown dress, with the virginal veil.* Pudens and his little daughter Praxedes followed her. The whole assembly rose to do her honor, while Thecla, with a deep inclination, uttered the usual Christian salutation:

“Peace be with you.”

“And with thy spirit,” answered the brethren.

* “In Thecla, according to the blessed teaching (of *St. Paul on the advantage of virginity*,) had died every trace of youth and beauty,” &c. S. GREGOR. NYSS. *Homil. XIV, sup. Cant. Op.* Ed Migne, t. I, p. 1068.

Thecla was too humble and modest to open the conversation; the others felt even more diffident than herself. Nobody found the first words in the presence of that renowned virgin surrounded with such a halo of holiness and miracles. What could they say, too, in the actual state of things in the Church? They knew that she had crossed the sea, doubtless with the hope of being able to kiss the chains of Peter and of her beloved teacher Paul; and how could they tell her, as a first greeting, as the first mark of courteous welcome, that both Apostles were already under the executioner's axe? Every face was full of grief, every eye wet with tears; they could not keep down their grief, it was like a funeral.

Thecla perceived this and said: "My masters and brethren in Jesus Christ, I see well that I have come in upon you unexpectedly, in the midst of your tribulation—yet I may deliver to you the greetings of our brethren in Seleucia whence I come."*

* From the *Acta S. Theclæ*, in the martyrology of St. Ado, Sept. 23d, it is related that this Saint, after many wonderful interpositions of Providence, was restored to freedom by the Proconsul, who had condemned her to be exposed to the wild beasts—a thing which was sometimes done at this period when the edicts of persecution had not yet been officially published—and then passed the remainder of her life in Seleucia. The same

“May Jesus Christ give prosperity and happiness to our brethren in Seleucia,” replied Linus: “and you, dear sister, have not come out of season, but are always beloved and blessed by the brethren in Rome.”

“Thanks for your great charity,” said Thecla: “but all are in great grief through love for Peter and Paul.”

At the mention of these names, such a burst of grief was manifested in the assembly that Thecla understood at once that Peter and Paul were really the subject of their mourning. She became alarmed, in turn, and asked with some anxiety: “Father, I conjure you, hide nothing from me! What has become of our Apostles? Do they still live?”

“They shall live on earth until to-morrow,” replied Linus, “and then in heaven.”

Thecla allowed her head to sink forward upon

account is given in the *Acts of Paul and of Thecla*—Vid. *Bibliot. Vet. Patr.* by Gallandi, t. I, p. 167, Venice edition, 1765—and though these acts are not held in great repute, by reason of the fables introduced into them by writers more pious than discreet, yet in every material point they agree with the acts of the martyrology of St. Ado, and, what is more satisfactory, with the many testimonies of the ancient Fathers. Some of the least reliable traditions represent her as having come to Rome.—Vid. Bolland, Sept. 23d, p. 555. But without committing ourselves to any of these traditions, we take the simple probability, which is not contradicted by any ancient writing.

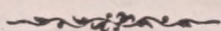
her breast, as if the words of Linus had been an arrow which pierced her to the heart. This weakness, however, was but passing: she shook off the stupor, raised her head and her eyes to heaven, clasped her hands tightly together, but did not weep. In this attitude she remained for a moment, mute and motionless; then she murmured: "God's will be done! I shall witness with my own eyes, the death of my father! But could I not possibly see the Apostles to-day?"

"Sister," answered Linus, "you have, at other times, obtained from his jailors, access to Paul by means of your jewels;* but these keepers are inexorable. You may perhaps see his glorious remains, if God grants us the consolation of obtaining possession of them."

"Oh! Father," she exclaimed, throwing herself at his feet, with outstretched hands, "shall I then only behold him dead? May this chalice pass from me!" This was uttered in a tone of intense agony, which gave a singular fitness, on her lips, to the words of the agonizing Saviour. Linus, who was deeply moved, said to her:

"Handmaid of the Lord, I shall not add sorrow

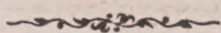
* *Acts of St. Thecla.* St. John Chrysostom, *Homily XXV, on the Acts of the Apostles*, Opp. ed. Migne, t. IX, p. 198.



to your sorrows ; our virgins are not to be present at the martyrdom ; but to your venerable age I grant that you should follow our Apostles to their passion as God may inspire you. You may thus see them in their last triumph and receive their last blessing."

These words seemed to give new life to Thecla. She rose up, her countenance as serene as might be amid such heart-rending grief, inquired into the condition of the Church in Rome, and gave a full account of herself and of the brethren in Asia. She asked particularly about the sufferings of the Apostles, their condemnation, the place of punishment, in a word about all the particulars connected with those days of sorrow and trepidation. But so great was the grief of each member of the flock, that hardly a word was spoken save to mourn the imminent departure of Peter and Paul from earth. Thecla conferred with the matrons who were to have charge of the funeral rites. The assembly was dismissed amid tears and sighs ; and that night was one of watching and prayer in all the Churches of Rome.

Nero knew nothing of the tears and prayers of Christian Rome ; he was busy with his usual ostentatious folly, celebrating his Grecian victories. The crowns of triumph he sent to be raised up in



sight of the people on the obelisk of the Circus Maximus and on that of his own Circus on the Vatican. They were afterwards, by his order, removed from there, and suspended, some in the halls of his own palace near at hand, others in the Palatine palace and Golden house;* the city was full of Nero's crowns. And he did not see, the senseless man! that all the crowns of the earth were falling from his hands, that the very diadem of the empire was tottering on his head, and was soon to pass to the brow of a despised foreigner whom he held in chains in the Mamertine prison.

At length came the dawn of the twenty-ninth day of June, eagerly sought by the prayers of the Apostles, tearful to the Church militant, the bearer of glory to those intrepid champions, indifferent to Nero, fore-ordained from all eternity by the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, to end the sway of heathen Rome and to inaugurate the rule of believing Rome. The first flushes of the rising dawn found the faithful, sad and silent, watching the prison of Peter and Paul. Some were slowly moving up and down the ascent of the asylum,

*Suet. *Nero*, 25; DIO CASSIUS, *Histor. Rom.* LXIII, 21. The obelisk of the Circus Maximus is now in the Piazza del Popolo, that of Nero's Circus is on the square of St. Peter's very near to its original position.

others were pacing the Mamertine quarter, others, in groups, were conversing in the Forum, while others were hastening along the streets of the Velabrum, towards the Porta Trigemina, having learned from Pudens that both prisoners were to be executed at the usual place, the Aquæ Salviæ on the Ostian road. The most numerous class of persons present were the Jews and some Pagans; they were eager to see the criminals, and the Jews showed a cruel joy at the prospect of a speedy and bloody vengeance. Each one of them showed the feelings of his heart upon his countenance, when, at the rising of the sun, the double guard was assembled, the doors of the prison grated upon their hinges, and were slowly swung back, as the prisoners at length appeared.

The blessed Apostles saw the light for the first time after a long captivity in darkness, and their first glance, though painful from the dazzling effects of the light, was toward heaven which was already opening above their heads; then quickly recognizing the disciples, amid the confused mass, they saluted them, and received in turn the affectionate greeting of their faithful followers. Their brutal jailors left them no time to comfort themselves with these proofs of mutual charity, but led them quickly through the Forum, the Tuscan

quarter and the Velabrum to the Aemilian bridge.* Already had the whole quarter of the Trastevere heard that the two leaders of the Christians were going to punishment, and the whole Jewish population, very numerous in that part of Rome, poured in from every alley and by-way, crowding along toward the main street which led from the Aemilian

* The Tuscan street, through which the Apostles were made to pass, on their way from the Mamertine prison, ran for some distance along the present Via della Consolazione, then turned into the Velabrum, of which the exact position is shown by the present San Giorgio in Velabro and thence to the Aemilian bridge, the same as the Pons Lepidus, Lapideus, Palatinus, Senatorius, Ponte Sta. Maria, and now known as the Ponte Rotto. This bridge crosses from the Velabrum to the very heart of the Trastevere; then by following the Lungaretta we pass the Churches of St. Chrysogonus, Santa Maria in Trastevere, then the Janiculum, and San Pietro Montorio, and finally the Porta San Pancrazio, the old Aurelian gate. The Foro Boario stood on the hither side of the bridge and opposite to the Trastevere; it stretched along the river on the level space between the Ponto Rotto and Santa Maria in Cosmedin, thus taking in the two little shrines of Fortuna Virilis now Santa Maria Egiziaca, and of the Mater Matuta (or according to others, of Vesta) now Santa Maria del Sole. Between these two shrines the great Ostian street must evidently have passed which, at a short distance off, near the Church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, led out of the Porta Trigemina, now in ruins; then running along between the slope of the Aventine and the Tiber it touched the Marmorata—one of the old dock-yards of Rome—and turning sharply inland passed the Cestian pyramid, where now stands the Porta Ostiense or St. Paul's gate, in the still standing Aurelian wall.

bridge to the Janiculum and the Aurelian gate, supposing that Peter, at least, who was of their nation, would be led to death by that route; many, to secure a better view, hurried across the bridge and ranged themselves along the Forum Boarium, or cattle-market—especially thronging the space about the shrines of Fortuna Virilis and the Mater Matuta.

It would not be easy to describe their rage when, after all their haste and trouble, they found themselves deceived. The centurion of the guard, just before reaching the Aemilian bridge, turned to the left along the Tiber, and crossing the Forum Boarium was marching towards the Porta Trigemina. At this movement the enraged populace, like a wild beast whose prey has been torn from its grasp, ran madly after the centurion, to turn him back. The prefects of the various districts meeting on the bridge determined to secure the rights of their people, and partly by reasoning, partly by influence and money, to obtain the satisfaction of their cruel curiosity.

But while this council was held on the bridge, the Apostles, hurried on by the soldiery, had already passed the Porta Trigemina and the dock-yard. As they passed along the slope of the Aventine, they had met a great number of Christian matrons and

~~— and Paul —~~

maidens, who came in little groups and bands from the villas along the hill, begging as a special favor the last blessing of Peter and Paul. The meeting of the Apostles with Plautilla was most affecting. This noble lady, trusting to the protection of her high rank, and strengthened by her charge to be present at the martyrdom, pressed forward eagerly, and with many tears offered her services to the Apostles. Paul, wishing to satisfy, as far as he could, this holy desire, said to her :

“Sister, it is a custom with those of my nation who are going to death, to bandage their eyes, have you a veil?”

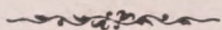
The holy matron looked about her, but she had not provided herself with another veil.

“Give me yours,” continued Paul, “and I shall return it to you soon.”

The guards laughed scornfully at this promise from a man so soon to be put to death. But Plautilla, quickly removing the veil from her head, handed it to Paul, at the same time kissing the fetters which confined his hands.* She then withdrew and followed them at a little distance.

The escort had hardly passed the sepulchral pyramid of Caius Cestius, when the Jews of the

* *Passion of St. Paul*, in the *Biblioth. of LA BIGNE*, ubi sup.



Trastevere came up, heated and covered with dust; their leaders at once surrounded the centurion and began to reason with him. They alleged that "of the criminals who were being led to execution, one was of their nation; that he had been condemned by the justice of Cæsar precisely because, after having deserted the ancestral rites of that nation, he had outraged the sanctity of the Roman religion and the majesty of Augustus; reason demanded that this salutary example might not be denied to the inhabitants of the Trastevere, the more, too, because the people were now waiting in great excitement and indignation." The centurion replied that the sentence did not specify any particular place, and that he was not at all disposed to turn back now, for their pleasure, especially as the sun was beginning to be extremely hot. He told them, moreover, that if they were so eager for the sight, they might accompany him to the *Aquæ Salvæ*, and there they might be consoled. But the savage populace, thirsting for blood, was not quieted by this cool reply. Their fast increasing numbers gave them additional boldness, and they began to cry out:

"Give him a turn through the Trastevere!"
"Cæsar has said so!" "We must see him on a cross!"

Some of the soldiers came up to the centurion and whispered to him: "Satisfy them. Give them that one who is to be crucified; what difference does it make to you? They will repay the favor."

"You shall answer for it," replied the centurion, "if anything happens against the law. Take him, and crucify him wherever they wish."

Paul overheard the last words; turning to Peter he threw his arms, loaded as they were with chains, about the neck of his fellow-apostle, and imprinted upon his forehead the last kiss of fraternal love, with the words: "Peace be with thee, O Rock of the Church, and Shepherd of the flock of Christ."

"Go in peace," replied Peter, "Teacher of the Saints and Guide of the Just."

They said no more; but their hearts spoke from their eyes, as they separated, Paul, to continue his route, Peter, to return toward Rome.* As he went, he was greeted with a storm of cries and yells by the Jews, the followers of the Magician, and the Pagans of all classes. Pointing to

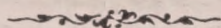
* This is a most ancient tradition commemorated by an oratory and a stone which records the affectionate farewell of the Apostles; and we find nothing historical to contradict it. How they could have kept together so far as this, when they should naturally have been separated at the Aemilian bridge, we have shown by most probable conjectures, backed by those of BARONIUS, ann. 69, No. 9.

the summit of the Janiculum, they shouted in his face: "See, your cross is already standing there!" "*We* prepared it!" "The gallows awaits you for glory!" "Go on, old wizard!" "Lictors, unbind your fasces—handle the rods!"

Peter did not open his lips; he was absorbed in God and thought of the words of his Divine Master: "Amen, Amen, I say to thee; when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not."

And he looked up smilingly to heaven, and then joyfully saluted the cross on Mount Janiculum.*

* We place the martyrdom of St. Peter upon the Montorio, and not on the Vatican: and since some learned writers differ from us in this, we think a word of explanation necessary. The Montorio has, in its favor, the common opinion of four or five hundred years, an opinion so probable, moreover, that it has found powerful advocates, among whom may be mentioned Cardinal BARONIUS, ann. 69, n. 15 et seqq.; Torrigius, *Grott. Vatic.* 2d Ed. 1639, p. 194; these writers openly defend our view, while it is favored by Benedict XIV, and others, who either support it or receive it without question. Notwithstanding all this, we freely confess that the tradition on which alone we have relied, grows less positive in proportion as we examine it more deeply, and that the monuments, both of the primitive and of the middle ages—for we have carefully examined them—all point to the Vatican. We also grant that for two hundred and fifty years, nearly all scholars have agreed, in



assigning the Vatican as the place of execution. We say *nearly all*, for there are few exceptions: one of them is Fr. F. Giovanni da Capistrano, whose work we have not been able to find; another is Monsignor Pacifici,—*Dissert. sul martirio di S. Pietro nel Gianicolo, e sulla venuta e morte nello stesso monte di Noe*, ecc. Roma, 1814, two vols. in one, 12o.,—beside several others of less note. Even Maffeo Veggio,—*De Rebus antiq. mirabil. S. Petri*, quoted fully in the Bollandists, June 29th, vol. VII,—who died in 1547, and is summoned as the first witness in favor of Montorio, to our diligent investigation offers only doubtful testimony. Besides, Bianchini says of him, in his *Not. ad Anast. Bibliot.* ed Migne, t. I, p. 1033: “Nemo ex antiquis dubitavit, quod sciam, de loco martyrii B. Petri. Consensus omnium ætatum docet in circo Vaticano eum crucii affixum. . . *Primus omnium, ut arbitror, Maphæus Veggius argutus est*,” etc. Of the same opinion as Bianchini, who was a canon of St. Mary Major’s, in the middle of the 18th century, we find an earlier writer, Bosio, *Roma Sotterr.* Rome, 1632, 11, 3; also Foggini, *De Romano Divi Petri Itinere*, etc., ad Bened. XIV, Florence, 1751, page 398; and a little later Mgr. Borgia *Vaticana Confessio*, etc., Rome, 1776, page 81: with Cuccagni *Vita di San Pietro*, etc., dedic a Pio VI, Rome, 1777, t. III, p. 214; and the learned Canon Cancelieri, *De Secretar. Basil. Vatic.* Rome, 1786, 4-4to., page 944; and, to name living authorities, Zanelli, *Roma e San Pietro*, Rome, 1867, page 30; with Bottari, Mamachi, and many others whom we have not had leisure to consult personally, but find quoted. Now against this array of authorities, of documents and reasoning, we have in our favor only the opinion mentioned above; and yet we have chosen to follow this opinion, in our legend, because archæologists not having yet succeeded in fixing the precise spot on the Vatican where the crucifixion took place, it has seemed to us that to place it one kilometre farther, on the strength of a plausible conjecture, cannot be considered a great error.



CHAPTER X.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE APOSTLES.

PETER had already passed through the Porta Trigemina and was in sight of the Aemilian bridge, his soul full of joy at the thought of his approaching sacrifice, when suddenly he was snatched from the region of high contemplation by a loud uproar. Raising his eyes he saw a crowd of soldiers, players and Augustans pouring out of the Velabrum into the Ostian road, with loud shouts and noisy demonstrations. It was the escort of Nero, who was going down to indulge in his usual recreation of a sail upon the river amid songs and orgies, thus escaping for a while the heated atmosphere of Rome.* Augustus raised his head from the cushions of the imperial litter, and seeing the bridge thronged with people, inquired of his attendants what had brought them there. He was

* Suet. *Nero*. 27.

told that they were taking to the gibbet a Jew from the Trastevere.

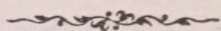
“What Jew?” asked the emperor.

“A fellow named Simon,” answered the officer. “Your majesty may remember that sorcerer who was always at war with poor Simon Icarus.”

“Oh! you mean Simon Peter; I remember, the fellow who bewitched our ladies and made them all as stubborn and cross-grained as — well; he is the madman who was so frantic about his Christ; very good, let him go and preach to Cerberus; I remember now that I sentenced him the other day.” And Augustus sank back languidly upon the cushions from which he had raised his head to make these inquiries.

Peter had hardly given a glance to Nero; as he stood in the midst of his escort while they halted to let the emperor pass, he was praying in his heart for his bereaved flock; “Lord, save Thy people from the Cæsars, Thy enemies.” The Archangel, St. Michael, answered in his soul: “Thou art heard. The Lord has commanded me to unsheathe the flaming sword with which I once rid heaven of its rebellious spirits; the decree is passed, and Nero shall not survive this year. His imitators in guilt shall share his punishment.”

The Vicar of Jesus Christ thanking God for this

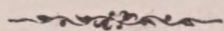


assurance of His watchful care over the destinies of His Church, crossed the bridge with a light and joyful heart.

It was marvellous to see how, little by little, the feelings and the actions of the multitude changed. Presently, very few insulted their victim except the Simonians. The rest, Jews and Gentiles, when they saw the aged prisoner drawing nearer and nearer to the place of execution, so serene in countenance, so mild and passionless in his actions, so venerable and dignified in carriage, felt themselves as if under the influence of some hidden power, gradually becoming softened and even moved to compassion. Then in the hearts of the dwellers in the Trastevere, arose the memory, still fresh and strong, of the wonderful works of Peter, of his sweet words, of his affectionate care for the sick and destitute.

"Poor old man!" sighed many. "What harm has he done? Alas! What times!" Even the soldiers seemed less indifferent and more inclined to pity than to harshness.

But the Apostle noticed none of these things, for he was exchanging the last salutations with the faithful whom he saw on his way, and giving them his parting blessing by raising his eyes to heaven and bowing his head towards them. Thus he had left his apostolic benediction to the brethren

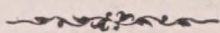


gathered near the Fountain of Oil,* and then steadily began to ascend the slope of the Janiculum. The enemies of Peter had set up the gibbet on a level spot on the summit of the rock, and the brutal guards, urged on by the thought of the promised reward, thrust the saint rudely toward the place. Peter saw the cross and bowed deeply towards it; then turning to the faithful who were pressing closely around him, seemingly forgetful of the popular fury, he said to them: "Brethren, join me in blessing the dispensations of the Lord. This was revealed and promised to me long ago by our Lord. The disciple is not greater than the master, nor the servant above his lord. Be not then troubled at the thought that I must now put off this body which separates me from the Lord. The hour of sacrifice has come; Farewell! Remember the things I have spoken to you. I leave you in the keeping of our Lord Jesus Christ."†

Having thus spoken, the Apostle advanced towards

* Now Santa Maria in Trastevere. It seems very probable that, from the earliest times, there was here an assembly of Christians who met in private dwellings. Their right to these houses was disputed some fifty years afterward, but they were finally re-established in possession of them by the Emperor Alexander Severus, according to LAMPRIIDIUS, in *Severo*. Not far from the *Fons Olei* must have stood the *Vicus Januclensis*, found in the old topographical sketches of Rome.

† *Passion of St. Peter*, ubi sup.

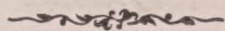


the cross with quickened pace and arms wide extended, as one who longed to be in its embrace. "O, Cross!" he exclaimed: "O, Cross, full of hidden mystery! Thou hast joined man to God, freeing him from the bondage of the enemy; thou perpetual peacemaker between heaven and earth, and dispenser of pardon; I long for thee; I burn, I am consumed with the desire to possess thee."*

The executioners hardly gave him time to finish his prayer; the last words were still upon his lips when they tore off his poor tunic and bound him to a pillar which was secured in the ground; in a few moments the scourges had reduced his body to one gashed and bleeding mass. The Martyr-Apostle, mindful of the sufferings of his divine Master, showed no more sign of pain than if his soul, already resting in the bosom of his God, were insensible to the sufferings of the body. But when the executioner was about to bind his body and his arms with the ropes that were to fasten him to the cross, Peter opened his lips only to say, with a look of entreaty: "Why need you care if you crucified me head downward?"

"Very well," replied the soldier, hiding an irresistible feeling of compassion: "If that seems to

* *Passion of St. Peter, ubi sup.*



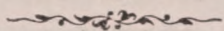
you less painful, let it be as you please." And signing to his attendants to reverse the instrument of death, he threw the rope that secured the body of the Saint, over the stock and drew him up; then making two turns with the end around the waist, he hurriedly nailed his hands to the cross-pieces, threw his tools to an attendant, and hastily quitted the spot, leaving the crucified to the care of the soldiers. As he descended the hill, he muttered to himself: "By Jove! it is a pity; he does not look like a malefactor. Well, I hope his sufferings may be short."

Meanwhile the faithful present upon the accursed mount had experienced, one by one, every torture inflicted upon their beloved father, the blows of the knotted ropes, the tight pressure of the rough cords, the piercing of the hard nails; and they suffered with him in his agony. They understood, which the unbelievers could not understand, the meaning of that last favor asked of men by Peter, that he might hang upon the cross with his head downward. One attributed it to his deep humility, which would not let him die in precisely the same manner as his divine Master; another thought that it came from an insatiable desire of suffering; while many saw in it a result of both these motives together.*

* We have no ancient document in proof of this scourging,

While the faithful followers of the Apostle were giving vent to their anguish in prayers and tears, suddenly the voice of Peter was heard above the noise, loud and clear: "Lord Jesus Christ take pity on my children and show something of my happiness to Thy servants who are grieving for me." The eyes of all were fixed upon Peter more intently than ever, and the true believers saw (for God displayed to them the mystery) a choir of heavenly spirits in human form hovering over the dying Apostle and holding out to him crowns of glory and garlands of flowers gathered in the garden of heaven. Such was the splendor which shone forth

not even in the *Passio S. Petri*; but we know well that it was the custom then in regard to all those who were condemned to death. Beside this we have the tradition of the Roman Church on this subject; and the very pillar to which it is piously believed that the Saint was fastened during the infliction of this punishment is still venerated in the Church of Sta. Maria in Traspontina. Again it was by no means uncommon to crucify with the head downward, and the most authentic tradition of the Apostle's death confirms this belief; beside, we must accept the testimony of the holy Fathers, who assert that it was done in the case of St. Peter, and at his own request. Now whether he was nailed or only tied to the cross is not very certain; the prevailing custom was to nail criminals; and this belief we receive, as most probable, on the testimony of St. John Chrysostom, and of the old *Acts of St. Peter*, quoted by Surius. For the details of crucifixions, the reader is referred to LIPSIUS, *De Cruce*, where they are minutely stated in three books.



from their countenances, and, so dazzling was the light which surrounded them, that it was almost too much for human eyes. While the faithful were gazing in speechless rapture on this heavenly vision and felt comforted by the triumph of their beloved father, a new prodigy was added to that which they now beheld; for suddenly, amid the bright hosts of heaven the form of Peter himself seemed to rise up, radiant with indescribable splendor, while his divine Master appeared at his side, apparently suggesting words to the Saint. Then, for the last time, the Apostle raised his voice and prayed aloud: "Eternal Shepherd, true Son of God, I recommend to Thee the flock Thou hast entrusted to me. Do Thou preserve it in union, Thou, Who art the door, and the sheep-fold, and the shepherd, and the pasture, in time and in eternity. To Thee be glory, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, now and forever."

The faithful, out of themselves with rapture, uttered a fervent "Amen!"

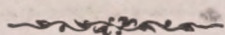
Peter was no more.* The sun was setting; the soldiers began to withdraw; the heathens were struck with astonishment. The Christians, reassured and emboldened, crowded around the cross

* That the death of St. Peter was preceded by this prodigy and by such a prayer is testified by the *Passio*; and we know no ancient testimony or modern argument that can invalidate it.

praising God. The holy matrons, Anastasia and Basilissa spread beneath the instrument of death a cloth of precious material, while Marcellus and the other priests began, with the greatest reverence, to remove the holy remains. Claudia Sabinilla gathered up with a sponge the blood which had coagulated on the ground, while her pious companions scraped off every trace of it from the earth and the wood. At length, the precious remains were deposited in the coffin kept in readiness in a neighboring house—for the prudent “handmaids of the Martyrs” had foreseen everything—and after reverently kissing the sacred relics, they left the hill. At a sign from Linus the brethren went off in different directions; the unbelieving crowd was already out of sight.

Thus amid silence and the falling darkness, while pagan Rome was reveling amid orgies and noisy banquets; the faithful followers of Peter, bearing the sacred burden upon their shoulders, passed out of the gate at the foot of the Janiculum.* Then threading the cross-roads in the valley, they bore him, as they would have carried any ordinary corpse, to the usual abiding place on the Vatican.

* The Porta Janiculensis or Aurelian, is now known as the Porta di San Pancrazio.



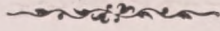
The hiding place sanctified by the presence of the first Vicar of Jesus Christ, was on the western slope of a hill known as Mons Aureus, rising at the foot of the Vatican mount, which almost surrounded it with its semi-circular curve. This little hill, which has since been levelled, became the foundation of the noblest monument ever reared by human hands; but in the days of Nero it bore upon its summit a temple of Apollo, while the northern slope was graced by a pleasure-palace which served at times as a Naumachia. At the foot of the hill was the famous Circus of Nero, surrounded by the rising borders of the valley, except where the main entrance opened upon the gardens of Agrippina now inherited by Nero. These gardens embraced a rich combination of luxuriant meads, of elegant walks, gardens and groves, extending to the bank of the Tiber, where it was spanned by the bridge of Caligula. The pleasure-loving Romans who frequented the Park and the Circus of Nero could not foresee that the then insignificant resort of the hated Christians, hidden behind the stately pile raised by imperial magnificence, was one day to outshine the palaces of Augustus and the memories of Romulus on the Palatine or the Capitol. Indeed they did not even know its existence, for to the casual observer nothing was to be seen but a com-

mon cottage not different from any of those by which it was surrounded, though near it was an enclosure for private burial extending along the hill to the foot of the temple of Apollo. Much less could they know of the crypts dug out in the bowels of the earth as a resting place for the departed brethren. Such was the primitive Church of the Vatican where Peter used to catechize the new converts, to baptize the neophytes, to confirm the disciples and to ordain the bishops for the new Christian communities.*

* It would not be easy to point out the precise spot on the Vatican mount where the Roman faithful were wont to meet; for the great extent of the two basilicas which succeeded each other there have completely changed the topographical conditions of the place. Still we may with strong grounds of probability place it on the spot at present crowned by the apsis of St. Peter's; this seems to agree best with all the historical documents on the subject. The sepulchre of St. Peter was never removed, or at least very little; so that the temple of Apollo must have stood on the spot now occupied by the Confession of St. Peter, as we learn that the Apostle was buried very near to that shrine. The Vatican Cemetery, within the limits of which this sepulchre was situated, must have been very near by, as also the house in which the Christians met together. It should be borne in mind that, in the time of Nero, a piece of ground occupied by a sepulchral monument was always, by law, held to be inviolable. But these places might very well serve for burial places and, at the same time, answer the purposes of a Church and a baptistery, (as was the case in other ancient cemeteries of which we read, *ubi Petrus baptizabat*;) for it was easy to build a house on the ground which would naturally

Already the matrons appointed to render the

pass for the dwelling of the keeper of the place, as was usual in those days. What we know certainly is that, immediately after this, we find that the faithful used to meet in the Church on the Vatican, and that the Popes were buried there. Now as no such tract of ground could have been taken on the eastern slope of the hill, which was occupied by the imperial gardens, nor on the southern base, which was certainly taken up by the Circus, nor yet on the northern side, where rose the palace of Nero, it seems plain enough that the outer limit of the cemetery together with the house used for the Christian assemblies, must have been on the western brow, that is towards the apsis of the Basilica, and over the present Grotte Vaticane. By adopting this topography it can be shown ultimately that St. Peter was buried on the Mons Aureus (as is repeatedly asserted by *Anastasius Biblioth.*) which may also be gathered from the expression of Prudentius: "Tumulum sub Monte Vaticano." Besides, it is well known that the spot on which the Basilica now stands was very lofty, as may be seen by what remains of the stairs leading up to it. It is evident that he was buried *juxta palatium Neronianum in Vaticano*, or *in Vaticano palatio Neronis*, as is variously stated by Anastasius, since that palace occupied the space embraced by the western wing of the Basilica where it is placed even by Canina on the authority of ancient ruins. We can see how (on the hypothesis of the crucifix on the Vatican,) St. Peter came *ad locum qui appellatur Naumachia, juxta obeliscum Neronis, in monte*, as we read in a very old work on the Passion of St. Peter; because the Naumachia was very near the palace of Nero, as Concellieri proves at length: (*De Secretar. Basil. Vat.* pp. 933-951,) and afterwards gave its name to the western portion of the Vatican vale as far as the present site of the Church of San Pellegrino, near the Porta Angelica, and which was still, in the middle ages, called San Pellegrino in Naumachia. We can also verify the "*sepultus est via Aurelia*," of Anastasius; because, whether that street existed in the time of Nero, or not, certainly when



last offices to the sacred remains of Peter, were gathered together, bringing with them rich ointments, spices and foreign compounds for this purpose. But the priest Marcellus, equally fervent and practical, wished to have a share in the duty, which he discharged with the assistance of Anastasia and Basilissa. They first washed the holy relics with

it was first made it ran along the side of the famous Circus of Nero, at the foot of the Mons Aureus, not far from the present sacristy of St. Peter's. There is proof, too, of the "*juxta viam triumphalem*," of St. Jerome; for, as we understand it, that street, at least in the time of St. Jerome, ran through the main cross walk of the Square before St. Peter's. In fine we can even explain the "*sepultus est in templo Apollinis*;" for, since Nero's gardens were intersected by the Piazza di San Pietro, Borgo Nuovo and Borgo Vecchio, as the most learned readily admit, they could very well have been bounded westward by the Circus (*clausum valle Vaticana spatium*, according to Tacitus, *Ann.* XIV, 14) that is, hemmed in between the Vatican mount and the base of the Aureus; then, as Tacitus seems to imply, by the Mons Aureus itself, on which was the shrine of Apollo before which Nero used to sing; then by the other buildings which crowned the ascent, viz: the *Palatium* and the *Naumachia*. On the other side of the hill, there could well be private property, in which might be a space set apart for a cemetery extending even close to the temple; a portion of this would form the Vatican cemetery in one of the crypts of which, at the foot of the temple of Apollo, the remains of the Apostle might have been deposited, without even entering the gardens of Cæsar. On this spot, afterwards, Anacletus raised a memorial of St. Peter, (ANAST. BIBLIO. *Anacl.*) which was celebrated in the primitive times. Constantine, at a later period, "*fecit Basilicam beato Petro Apostolo in templo Apollinis*," (ID. *Sylvester*), that is upon the ruins of the temple of Apollo.

fresh milk and rich wine, after which they carefully embalmed and anointed the body with precious ointments. They had prepared a new sarcophagus filled with the best honey of Attica, in which they placed the body, after the manner of burying the kings of the East;* and yet the disciples could not reconcile themselves to the thought of covering forever that venerated countenance until the other brethren had enjoyed a last look at it, especially those faithful ones who had followed Paul to do the same offices for him. Besides, the bishop Linus had not yet come; for as soon as he had received the last sigh of his dying master, he hastened away to

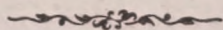
* There is no doubt that the body of St. Peter was preserved entire. As to the manner of preserving it, we may believe that, "Marcellus lavit illud lacte et vino optimo Melle attico novum replevit sarcophagum et in eo corpus aromatibus perlitum collocavit," as we read in the old *Passio*. This account is probable enough, since it was an Eastern custom to preserve the bodies of illustrious men by embalming them in gums, wax or some like substance. That it was a custom especially among the Hebrews, we know from passages in both the Old and the New Testament. The ancient Fathers, and Tertullian in particular, testify that it was a consecrated practice among the primitive Christians. It seems that in the time of St. Peter, the usage had passed even to the pagan Romans, for Tacitus observes, in speaking of Poppæa, the wife of Nero: "Corpus non igni abolitum, ut Romanus mos, sed regum externorum consuetudine, differtum odoribus conditur." *Ann.* XVI, 6.

the place where the other Apostle was to be executed.

Meanwhile, under cover of the night, which had already well set in, the sisters were coming together to pay a last tearful tribute to their common father ; among these of course were found Praxedes and Pudentiana, who had been summoned by their mother. They were gathered about the apartment, some apart in silence, some standing with clasped hands, some kneeling beside the bier, all engaged in prayer and awaiting the sacred banquet which was to be celebrated that night. Suddenly Plautilla entered the room accompanied by Thecla. All at once rose and gathering around these witnesses of the martyrdom of Paul, asked for the particulars of the event. Plautilla, overcome by fatigue, by watching and by grief, could only reply :

“I cannot speak of it. Here is the beloved daughter of Paul, let her speak, I am too faint.”

But Thecla had already passed along, and prostrate beside the bier, with her veil closely drawn over her face, she was already absorbed in prayer. Such was the veneration in which she was universally held, that no one ventured to recall her from her devotions. At last, Pudentiana, at a sign from her mother, gathered sufficient resolution to approach the kneeling saint, and raising a corner of



the veil, with that affectionate familiarity which their relations warranted, she whispered in her ear: "Handmaid of the Lord, forgive me; the brethren are eager to hear what Paul said to you in his last hour."

At the name of her beloved teacher, the aged virgin seemed to be inspired with new life; rising up she turned toward the assembled faithful, and exclaimed with kindling eye: "Paul! Paul! Do you not see him! I see him still as he passes along the Ostian road between his executioners. I recognize him and hasten toward him. Lucina (the Christian name of Pomponia Græcina) is with me and holds my hand. Paul looks upon us—oh! a look of Paul! what high mysteries are taught by a single glance of the great Paul! Richly am I repaid for all the troubles of my long journey from the East, since it has made me sharer in such a favor! But now he no longer looks at us—he is already under the rods; he is but one mass of bruises. He rises, turns toward the East and stretches forth his hands. Do you not hear his prayer, in his native Hebrew? Do not your hearts feel that he is uttering his last farewell to the brethren? He covers his face with the white veil of our sister and bows his neck to the axe;—milk and blood flow from the wound. See! the sacred

head has thrice rebounded from the ungrateful earth, uttering the name of Jesus! and three fountains spring up at the touch! The legionaries confess Christ—to-morrow they will come to ask for baptism at these very fountains! What splendor! The heavens are opened! the spirit of Paul is already far from earth, and enters the realms of eternal light! Who can look upon his glory? The angels of God are around him—Christ has crowned him! O, Paul, my master, take soon to thyself thy poor exiled handmaid; thou didst teach me the faith and virginity of Christ; I am thy daughter—Paul, my father, hear me, hear me, Paul!” And at these words tears gushed from her eyes, she once more drew the veil over her face, and prostrated herself at the foot of the coffin; no one had the heart to disturb her again.

Plautilla was now able to add some particulars to the account given by Thecla. Pomponia Græcina, Thecla and some of the other sisters had awaited the Apostles at Pomponia’s estate, which happened to border on the Ostian road, at the point known as the Aquæ Salviæ. They thought that both the prisoners would be put to death at that place; but God granted them to witness the martyrdom of Paul only, as Thecla had already said. That, in fine, Luke, Titus, and Timothy had brought the sacred

body to the farm of Pomponia, where they had buried it.*

“But who told you?” asked one of the brethren, “that we had chosen the Vatican cemetery for Peter?”

“We took it for granted,” answered Plautilla. “And besides,” she continued, lowering her voice and looking towards Thecla, “she was there and saw everything in spirit; she saw them both go out of the Porta Trigemina, and then continued to tell us what happened to them afterwards. She saw them embrace and separate; she saw the brethren

* The body of St. Paul still lies in this place, once the farm of Lucina, or Pomponia Græcina, but now the site of the celebrated Basilica of St. Paul. The prodigy of the milk and blood as well as of the three fountains, we give on the authority of the early Fathers and of the *Passion of St. Paul*. Beside these, we have also the most ancient Roman traditions on the subject and the very ancient Church of the Three Fountains built on the spot, and inclosing the three miraculous fountains still fresh. A small pillar is also preserved here, which is supposed to have served as the block; it was sprinkled with blood or was made venerable by some other connection with the martyrdom of Paul. Another one is venerated in the Church of Santa Maria in Traspontina, near St. Peter's, with the old tradition that Paul was tied to it whilst being scourged. The Christian tradition is not invalidated by an appeal to the Roman law, for in a case of crime against religion, scourging might be inflicted even without recourse to the lawless cruelty of Nero. Vid. BARONIUS, *Ann.* 69, No. 8; and LIPSIVS, *de Cruce*, I, 13.

divide into two parties—in a word, she saw all. During the execution of Paul she did not shed a tear, but looked upon it like one in extacy, though she groaned and seemed to burn interiorly like wax in the fire. Before his body was inclosed in the sarcophagus, she took one of his hands and laid it upon her head, saying: ‘This hand baptized me, and pointed out to me the path, by virginity and martyrdom, to heaven;’ she kissed it and then, for the first time, wept. After a long pause, during which she had given free course to her grief, she suddenly exclaimed: ‘Peter has just departed to heaven; Paul comes to meet him,’ and in a few moments, again: ‘The brethren are carrying him to the Vatican.’ Then we took measures for the burial and started to come here.”

“But did you not bring any memorial of him?” interrupted Pudentiana with youthful earnestness.

“What could we take?” asked Plautilla.

“Pomponia Græcina had every relic of the martyrdom placed in the sarcophagus. She has promised to make every effort to secure also the pillar to which he was bound.”

“And the veil which you gave him?”

“How did you know anything about that?” asked the holy matron with some surprise.

“I heard it from the brethren who followed

Peter when the Apostles separated on the Ostian road."

The good Plautilla, seeing herself thus discovered, confessed with much modest embarrassment that she had received it back, according to the Apostle's promise. Here she was so closely pressed that she was at last obliged to tell in detail, how, when the executioners looked for it on the head of the martyr, it was hidden from their sight; and that, as she was returning to the city, the blessed Apostle had appeared to her, resplendent with glory, at the very spot where she had despoiled herself of the veil for him and restored it, all stained with fresh blood.

"And will you not let us look upon it?" asked Pudentiana; "let us kiss the venerable blood of Paul?"

"Yes, see it and offer it to God," said Thecla, who had been roused by the expression: "the blood of Paul."

Plautilla was not slow to satisfy this pious eagerness; nay, rather seeing the desire of the brethren to enjoy so precious a treasure: "Brethren," she said, "Paul has given it to the most unworthy of his handmaids; and I, from this moment, give it to the Church. To-morrow I shall place it in the

hands of Sister Lucina that she may have it put in the tomb."*

* In the time of St. Gregory the Great, there was still preserved in the tomb of St. Paul a handkerchief which Baronius believed to be the identical veil of St. Plautilla, mentioned in the *Passio Sti. Pauli*, with the particulars we have given. And we may easily believe that it is preserved there to this day, since we know nothing of its removal. It is certain that when, once, it was requested by the empress, in order to have it removed to a Basilica in Constantinople, the Pope replied that it could not be done because it was inclosed within the sacred monument, upon which no one would now dare to lay a violent hand. Witness the many punishments inflicted upon those who attempted it. Vid. more at length, ST. GREGORY, THE GREAT, *Epist.* lib. III, Ep. 33, Ed. Migne t. III, p. 700.





CHAPTER XI.

THE GLORIOUS SEPULCHRE.

SUCH were the consolations granted to the piety of the Saints of Rome, who had met to celebrate the triumphant obsequies of the Apostle Peter; and indeed so great was the attendance of the faithful, that the then narrow inclosure of the Vatican Church was too small to hold them. The Christians, therefore, retired into the crypts, and having conveyed the sacred body into the last cell, under the very foundation of the temple of Apollo, they there spent the hours in holy watching. The ancients, with the bishops Cletus and Clement and the priests, were in the hall where the sacred assemblies were usually held, awaiting the arrival of Linus, who, meanwhile, had been engaged at the house of Pomponia Græcina, in attending to the venerated relics of Paul. At last, when all had been duly arranged, he left them in

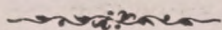
the care of the pious matron, then set out with Luke the evangelist, and the two bishops, Titus and Timothy. It was past midnight when he reached the Vatican cemetery.

At his entrance the clergy received him with sincere demonstrations of unusual reverence. The elders and the priests were the first to throw themselves at his feet, and to hail him, with one voice, as their father and their pastor. Clement and Cletus, already Peter's vicars in Rome, declared "that they would not allow the expressed wish of the Blessed Apostle Peter, who had named Linus as his successor, to be subjected to any examination. The fact of the appointment was well known, the Church of Rome had received it with joy; so that he might certainly consider himself established in the dignity of the Vicar of Jesus Christ."

"And the body of the blessed Peter?" interrupted Linus, whose heart and mind were full of this care.

"It has been attended to, and the brethren are already assembled to celebrate the last rites; but you should preside on the occasion."

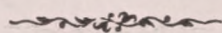
Linus could not resist the manifest designs of God upon him, but with a deep sigh he exclaimed: "O, Peter; O, my beloved father, do thou give some relief to my sorrow! Help, guide and support me!" And, as if overwhelmed by the



immense charge which had just been laid upon him, he sank almost powerless upon a seat by his side. Cletus and Clement soon restored him by a few words of well-timed comfort; they then led him into the passage of the sepulchral vaults, to the place where lay the sacred relics of the martyred apostle. The brethren hastened forward to offer their homage to the new pastor, who after a long and fervent prayer at the side of the bier, sat down upon a stool and raising his hand blessed the assembled faithful.*

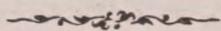
The dark and silent hour of night, the place of their meeting in the bowels of the earth, the numerous attendance of the faithful, the events of the preceding day, the threatening appearance of the persecution just renewed, the revered body of the first Vicar of Jesus Christ lying before them, and surrounded by the aureola foretold to him by the Saviour, all helped to make that last solemnity more sublime, because of its very secrecy. But the faithful, standing around the damp walls of the crypt, were eagerly awaiting the first words of the new Vicar of Jesus Christ. Linus remained silent, until Clement, who stood at his side, hearing the

* "Linus post martyrium beati Petri eligitur successor die proxima, 30 Junii," says the learned Bianchini in his *prolegomena ad* ANAST. BIBL. ed. Migne, t. I., p. 472.



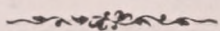
slight manifestation of wonder which escaped some of the Christians at this prolonged silence, ventured to whisper to him that the brethren were anxious to hear a word of comfort from his lips. Linus started at the sound of these words as one suddenly awakened from a deep sleep; then rising up, he stretched forth his hand, and opened his inspired lips:

“Who is like to Peter? Why, O, Apostle of Jesus Christ, why dost thou reveal thy glory to the least of thy disciples? Why dost thou thus weigh me down, adding vision to vision, wonder to wonder, mystery to mystery? Why impose upon my weak lips the task of telling what thought of man has never yet conceived? Brethren, I tremble and am confounded; for to-day, while our father hung upon the cross, as the sun sank behind the Vatican mount, I saw the shadow of the hill falling upon the city below—as the shadow crept along I saw one of the cherubim writing on its further edge: ‘So far the kingdom of Peter.’ Then the shadow darkened the Capitol, then the Palatine, and so passed away in the far east; and when Peter was breathing his last sigh, lo! the shadowy limit of his kingdom came up from the west and returned to the Vatican. The whole earth is given to him for his inheritance. His realm shall number its years by new provinces



added to the empire, and if any new lands spring up in the western seas they shall be for Peter. His shall be a kingdom like unto the kingdom of God, except that it shall have two boundaries, the world and time; nay, it shall even overstep these limits: for the kingdom of Peter has promises of eternity.

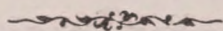
“The narrow tomb which is soon to receive the mortal remains of Peter shall be the palace and the throne of his immortal soul. I seemed, but a moment ago, to see him rise up, look around with threatening brow—and before his frown the temple of Apollo, the Palace and the Circus seemed to fall to the ground: then he stretched forth his hand even to the person of the imperial Cæsar, snatched the diadem from his brow and cast it into the mire. Other Cæsars gathered it up and set it upon their own brows, until Peter, seeing their hands red with Christian blood, struck them down with a single glance. At last, another Cæsar rose up, wiser than his predecessors; he bent the knee in reverence to the tomb of Peter, and traced around it the limits of a temple of the true God. The temple rose, stood for a thousand years, then, as it seemed too small, the nations of the earth reared it anew. The sun, in his daily course, lights no more splendid pile. O, Sepulchre of Peter! thy shadow shall be



as the shadow of a mountain when the royal palaces of the Cæsars cannot overshadow a little flower!

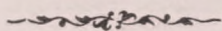
“I saw, too, the Rome of Romulus, of Augustus and of Nero, falling away piecemeal around the tomb of Peter, and upon the ruins rose new Rome. Her circuses, her theatres and her shrines lay broken in the dust—their columns shall support Christian temples. The very Capitol shall shake off the image of impure Jove; upon its trophies shall rise a nobler trophy, the cross of Christ; and in the gardens of Agrippina and of Poppæa, the doves that sighed for the love of Jesus shall build their nests. And when fire and steel shall have thoroughly purged the dross from the rebellious city, there shall remain only the city of Peter, and he shall, at the appointed time, bestow upon her the royal purple with the priestly stole.

“O, Rome of Peter! O, Metropolis of all faithful nations! The pilgrim who shall hereafter enter thy gates, shall no longer hear the brazen sounds calling to the sensual pleasures of the baths, nor the noisy pomp of the Cæsars; but his ear shall be saluted by consecrated sounds summoning to prayer and sacred psalmody in holy places; he shall hear the songs of the virgins whose life is given to the praise of their heavenly Spouse. Wherever he casts his eyes, he shall see either the altar of the



Lord, or the shrine wherein rest the bones of the saints, or the home of prayer, or the nursery of virtue, or the sanctuary of true science, or the home of the orphan, or the asylum of the virgin, or the refuge of the poor and the sick; and the pilgrim as he pronounces the words of the act of faith, shall feel a kindly breeze fanning his face as it gently whispers: 'Thou art in thy native land.' He will look for some traces of Peter, and he will find that there is not a vestige of the Apostle which is not marked by a monument, brilliant with gold and precious stones, an object of veneration of all ages. All Rome shall be a temple to Peter!

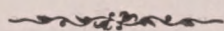
"Even here, here on this very hill, over this tomb shall stand the oracle of God; here, near these sacred remains shall rise the firm column of truth, the light of the world, the seat of an empire without limits. Here, where the splendid gardens of the Cæsars spread in proud luxuriance their rich fragrance around, though stained with our blood, here, in the days of God's mercy to men, the multitudes gathered together from the four winds of heaven to ask the blessings of Peter's successor, shall bow their foreheads to the earth; and kings shall be mingled with the throng. The voice of Peter, living in his successors, shall resound without limits of earth or sea, to the uttermost regions



under the sun ; and he whom the heir of Peter shall bless, he shall be blessed ; and he who rejects this blessing shall find no other ; the nation that falls under his ban shall be dead in the spirit, and the ruler of that people shall feel the crown tottering upon his brow, his sceptre shall become a reed, and his throne shall rock as a frail skiff tossed at the sport of the winds.

“ In the course of ages one shall sit upon this chair who shall bear the name of Piety. Toward him shall turn the hopes and affections of all the just ; and yet he must see the wicked rend, before his eyes, the precious robe of Peter, and the princes, rebelling against their common Father, sell or barter the fragments ; a shame and a disgrace to the nations regenerated by baptism ! But the pious victim, with eyes and hands upraised to heaven, calls upon new saints of God to help suffering Christianity, and he has already placed upon the brow of the great Mother the diadem of her crowning honor. He reminds the rulers of the divine rod, he recalls the wandering to the paths of justice, and lashes error with the power of the living voice of Peter.

“ But lo ! here where I stand and speak to you— here is reared the throne of that pious pastor. It is this very day renewed after a lapse of eighteen



centuries. Eighteen centuries shall roll over this tomb only to renew its glory. . . . We now bathe it with our tears, they surround it with joy. A hundred venerable senators, with hundreds and hundreds of the angels of the Churches, from the east and west, from the north and south, move around the tomb of Peter to the sound of solemn chants; and their holy Chief intones the words: 'Believe with me,' and they answer: 'Amen.' 'Hope with me,' and they say: 'Amen.' 'Love with me,' and once more they chant: 'Amen.' O joyful! O bright! O glorious day! on which I shall see them gathered around this tomb, a universal gathering of the teaching Church! now thousands and thousands of levites from their choir, and with them are joined the voices of nations of a hundred different tongues, but of one heart. They have come, they have hastened, the devoted sons of Peter, a people infinite in number. The rich bring to the tomb offerings of gold; the poor offer the half of their substance; the widow gives her nuptial-ring, and the young maiden her richest ornaments. And you brave youth of Rome and Italy; you valiant sons of Gaul, of Belgium, of Batavia and of Spain, what tribute do you bring to the tomb of Peter? Yes, they come! Behold, I see them gird on the sword for Peter's cause, and

for him dare the dangers of war. To that holy war the widow sends her only son; the younger bride her youthful spouse! What thought thus gives them strength?—Faith and love. What can they hope?—To die for Peter. Weep not for the brave who shall die for Peter on the field or on the mountain-side; they are martyrs of the Christian cause. Peter opens to them the bright path to heavenly glory, and they shall reign with Christ. O, Peter, powerful in heaven and on earth! Jesus Christ has clothed thee with the character of His priesthood and power; thou livest and reignest in thy successors, through the changes of earthly things and the splendors of the saints.”

Here Linus, who had uttered these inspired words with his eyes turned toward heaven, suddenly ceased. The faithful gave glory to God and to the Apostle, first Vicar of Jesus Christ, and then followed the sacred liturgy. At early dawn they came forth from the little Church of the Vatican, embracing one another in the fervor of their holy joy. Thecla said to the youthful Pudenciana, as she pressed the little maiden to her bosom: “Many thanks for having called me in time to witness these great wonders of the Lord.”

“It was not I who summoned you, sister,” re-

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
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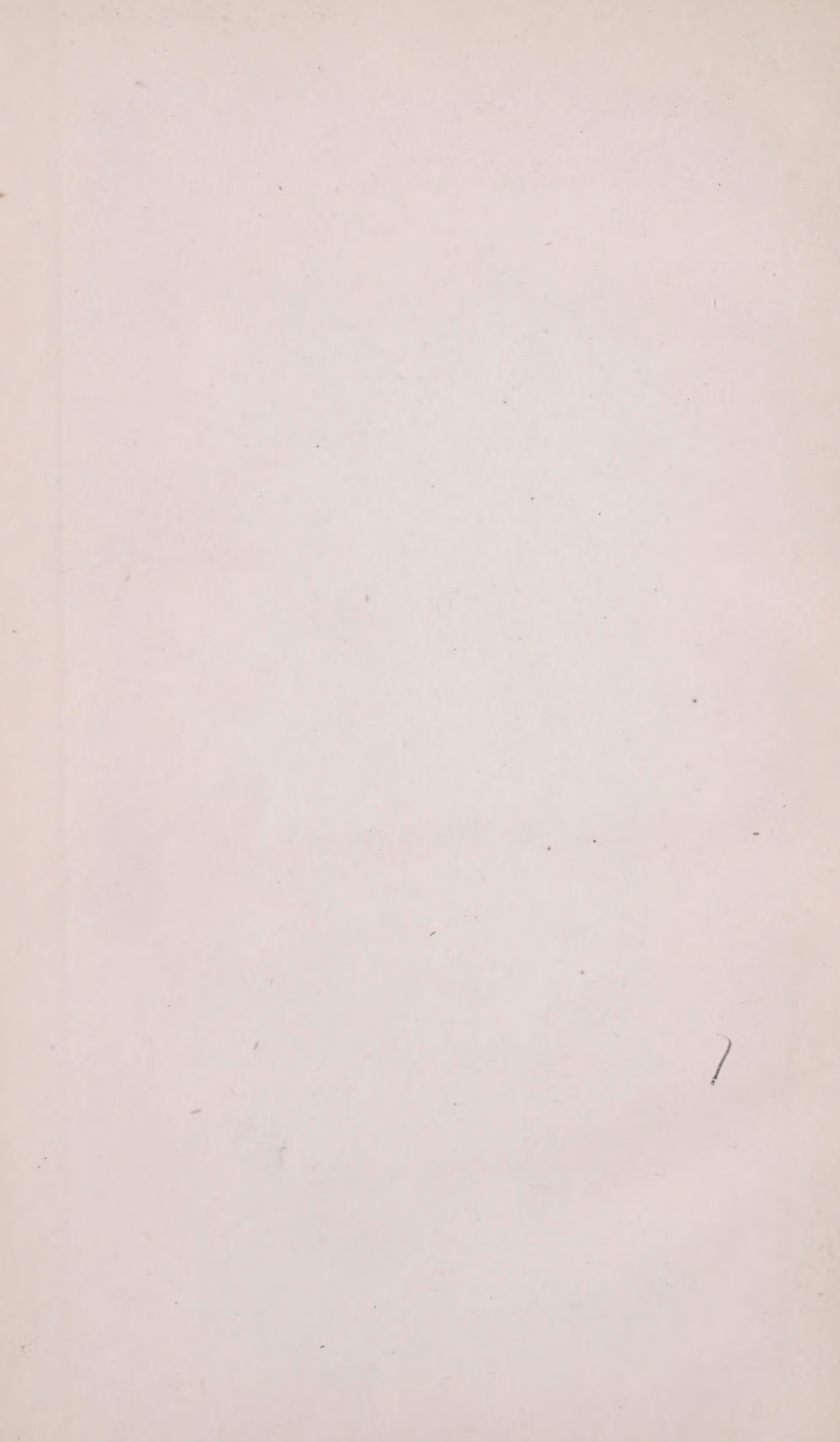
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